

A LOCAL HISTORY

Jesters Club

Mexborough, South Yorkshire



MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 1972 — SATURDAY 2 APRIL 1977

CONTENTS

- [I. Mexborough in the Early 1970s](#)
- [II. Opening Night, Monday 13 November 1972 — Ken Dodd](#)
- [III. The Venue & Management](#)
- [IV. The Northern Cabaret Scene](#)
- [V. Primary Source: Yorkshire TV Talent Show, 1974](#)
- [V-B. Primary Source: The Yorkshire Television Thank-You Letter, October 1974](#)
- [VI. Primary Source: Christmas Show Programme, 1974](#)
- [VII. Primary Source: South Yorkshire Times Press Cutting, c.1975](#)
- [VIII. Primary Source: South Yorkshire Times Advertisement, Feb 1976](#)
- [IX. Primary Source: South Yorkshire Police Letter — The St Valentine's Massacre, 1975](#)
- [IX. Primary Source: The Drifters Performance Photograph, 1976](#)
- [IX. Primary Source: Tommy Hunt Performance Photograph, c.1976-77](#)
- [X. Primary Source: Norman Collier — Backstage at Jesters](#)
- [XI. Performance Photograph: Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee](#)
- [XII. Performance Photograph: Duggie Brown](#)
- [XIII. Primary Source: Bobby Knutt & Dave Gill — Backstage](#)
- [XIII. Performance Photograph — Mac & Katie Kissoon \(believed\)](#)
- [XIV. Performance Photograph — Frank Ifield \(believed\)](#)
- [XV. Performance Photograph — Al Showman \(believed\), Talent Show Winner](#)
- [XVI. Primary Sources: Dave Gill — The Man Behind Jesters](#)
- [XVII. Soul Nights & the Northern Soul Connection](#)
- [XVIII. Complete Roster of Known Artists](#)
- [XIX. Year by Year, 1972-1977](#)
- [XX. Archive Footage](#)
- [XIX-A. The Night the Ice Broke — The Full Monty at Jesters](#)

[XIX-B. The Spaniard Cometh — Alfonso at Jesters](#)

[XIX-C. Inspector Clouseau at the Jesters — The Case of the Missing Christmas Tree](#)

[XIX-D. Jack Williamson's Management Bonding Day — Sea Fishing in Whitby](#)

[XX-A. The Price of Success — Why Jesters Closed](#)

[XXI. Final Night, Saturday 2 April 1977](#)

[XXII. After Jesters: The Windmill Club, Rotherham, 1977-78](#)

[XXIII. The Mansfield Brewery Years — Hollingwood Hotel and The Old House, 1978-1986](#)

[XXIV. Acorn Car and Van Hire, February 1986-1994](#)

[XXV. Sheila Gill: A Life Painted in Colour](#)

[The Story Doesn't End Here — David & Sheila Gill](#)

[XXIII. Legacy & Memory](#)

[XXIV. Sources & Further Reading](#)

Editorial note: This history has been compiled with the direct contribution of **David (P. D.) Gill**, who joined Jesters on 20 November 1973 as Reception Manager, was appointed Promotions Manager in April 1974, and became Manager in July 1974, and held that role until the club's final night on Saturday 2 April 1977. His first-hand accounts — including the Brotherhood of Man booking, the ownership structure through Punch Bowl Entertainments Ltd. and Mansfield Brewery, and the full roster of artists — are the foundation of this record. Primary source documents include: the souvenir brochure for The International Clubland Talent Show Grand Final (Yorkshire Television, 29 September 1974); the Punch Bowl Entertainments thank-you letter to Mr. D. Gill (7 October 1974); the Clubland's Third Annual Christmas Show programme (Christmas 1974); a local press cutting (c. August 1975); a colour performance photograph of The Drifters at Jesters (November 1976); a colour performance photograph of Tommy Hunt at Jesters (c.1976-77); a backstage photograph of Norman Collier at Jesters; a performance photograph of Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee at Jesters; a backstage photograph of Bobby Knutt with Dave Gill; a personal photograph of Dave Gill with his wife Sheila Gill ("my superstar") in the Disco bar at Jesters; and a portrait of Sheila Gill beside the Jesters stage — together the primary visual record of the club, its interior, its performers, and the people behind it; two photographs of Dave Gill; and the club's own business card. Secondary sources include the Rotherham Advertiser (2017) and broadcastbarnsley.wordpress.com.

I. Mexborough in the Early 1970s



Mexborough, a market town on the banks of the River Don in the West Riding of Yorkshire (reorganised as South Yorkshire in 1974), had long been shaped by the coal-mining and steelworking industries that defined the Dearne Valley. By the early 1970s it remained, in the words of local historian Julia Ashby, "an ambitious and vibrant town" whose cultural vitality was reflected in an entertainment scene extending far beyond the function rooms of its many working men's clubs.

The town sat at a geographical sweet spot equidistant from Sheffield, Doncaster, Barnsley and Rotherham. Venues that offered genuine quality — rather than the bingo-and-turn formula of the traditional working men's club — could draw audiences from far afield. Contemporary press coverage confirms that Jesters regularly received ticket enquiries from "areas well outside the area," exactly as its proprietor intended.

The early 1970s were the peak years of the British cabaret boom. Sheffield's Fiesta (opened 1970) billed itself as the largest nightclub in Europe. Batley Variety Club brought international superstars to working-class audiences. The Aquarius in Chesterfield also opened in 1972. Against this backdrop of regional ambition and grassroots appetite for glamour, Jesters Club was born.

Mexborough town centre. The town's position in the Dearne Valley gave Jesters a natural audience from across South Yorkshire — and beyond.



Jesters exterior — photograph sought

No exterior photograph of Jesters on Manvers Road has yet been traced. The Mexborough and District Heritage Society appealed for images in 2017.



Interior photograph sought

No interior photograph of Jesters is yet known to survive. Former customers with snapshots are warmly encouraged to come forward.

II. Opening Night — Monday 13 November 1972: Ken Dodd Headlines

Jesters Club opened on **Monday 13 November 1972** on Manvers Road, Mexborough. The club was officially opened by **R. W. (Robin) Chadburn, Chairman of Mansfield Brewery** — the most senior figure in the entire corporate structure, whose name appears again two years later on 29 September 1974, when he presented the prizes at the International Clubland Talent Show Grand Final at Jesters, recorded for Yorkshire Television. The opening night headline act was **Ken Dodd** — one of the most beloved and bankable comedians in Britain, whose marathon performances, Diddymen, tickling stick and irrepressible warmth made him the ideal act to launch a new South Yorkshire cabaret club.

The club was owned by **Punch Bowl Entertainments**, a subsidiary of **Mansfield Brewery** — one of the largest independent regional breweries in Britain, founded in 1855. Punch Bowl Entertainments was itself a substantial operation, managing **20 retail establishments and 5 hotels** across Derbyshire and Yorkshire: the **Aquarius in Chesterfield**, **Jesters in Mexborough**, **Ozzie's Night Owl at Sheffield Wednesday FC** (Hillsborough), and the **Windmill at Rotherham United FC** (Millmoor).

On **20 November 1973**, Dave Gill joined Jesters in the role of **Reception Manager**. In **April 1974**, Mick Pickard appointed him **Promotions Manager** — a role that suited his talents perfectly. By **July 1974**, following a series of management shifts, he stepped into the role of **Manager** — the title confirmed on the business card ("P. D. Gill, Manager") and in the Punch Bowl Entertainments letter of 7 October 1974. He held the post until the club's final night on Saturday 2 April 1977. Before joining Punch Bowl he had worked at the **Top Rank Suite, Silver Street, Doncaster** under manager **Colin Carruthers**, where he witnessed an extraordinary roster including **David Bowie** (Ziggy Stardust era), **The Kinks**, **Pink Floyd**, **Yes**, **Free**, **Rod Stewart**, **Mott the Hoople**, **Edwin Starr**, **Jimmy Ruffin**, **Marv Johnson**, **Judas Priest** and **Slade**, with the **Dave Howard Sound** as resident band throughout.

"I was at reception, yawning, when Mick Pickard looked over and asked, 'Are you tired?' I told him yes — I had a part-time job at the Mecca Bingo Club in Doncaster. He immediately said, 'Pack it in; we need a promotions manager here at the club.' He promised fewer hours and similar pay. The pay was fine... but I definitely don't remember working fewer hours."

— DAVE GILL, ON BEING APPOINTED PROMOTIONS MANAGER, APRIL 1974

When he left Top Rank, Dave Gill took up the role of **Assistant Manager at Mecca's Annabellas** in Bradford city centre — a significant step into one of the country's major entertainment chains. However, he was unable to find affordable accommodation that suited him in Bradford, and returned to Doncaster to take up the post of **Bar Manager at the Outlook Club** — a new disco just about to open. The opening night, at least, was something to remember: the headline act was **Pan's People**, the resident dance troupe of BBC's *Top of the Pops*, one of the most recognisable acts on British television between 1968 and 1975. YouTube: [Pan's People on Top of the Pops](#) However, his heart was not in it for the long term. After the scale and quality of Top Rank, these venues — late-night drinking spots, the usual boy-meets-girl scene — felt like a step back. It was the arrival of Jesters that changed everything.

But before Jesters came one more story — perhaps the most extraordinary fork in the road of Dave Gill's career. One day, standing at the reception desk at **Jesters Club**, two familiar faces walked through the main entrance: former Top Rank security lads. Dave went over to greet them. They were working the door at the **Playboy Club, London**. The club was having trouble finding a bar manager — and they had already recommended Dave Gill to the management. The offer was tempting: *good pay, a company flat, and a green Cortina with the Bunny Girl logo on the doors*.

He had more or less made up his mind to take it. But there was one thing holding him back: he was just about to get married. The Playboy Club, London, was not exactly the ideal environment in which to begin married life. He ran it by **Mick Pickard**, the Punch Bowl Entertainments Area Manager — already in post when Dave Gill joined Jesters in November 1973 — and his most valued professional ally. Mick's response was simple: if he fancied giving it a go, try it — and if it didn't work out, he'd sort him a job back at Punch Bowl.

Dave Gill did not go to the Playboy Club. He stayed. He got married. And Punch Bowl Entertainments offered him Jesters. The green Cortina with the Bunny Girl logo stayed in London. The reception desk on Manvers Road, Mexborough became his instead. And behind that desk, he met Sheila.

"The offer was tempting: good pay, a company flat, and a green Cortina with the Bunny Girl logo on the doors. I'd more or less made up my mind — but I was just about to get married, and the Playboy Club wasn't exactly the ideal place to start married life. I ran it by Mick Pickard. He simply said that if I fancied giving it a go, I should try it — and if it didn't work out, he'd sort me a job back at Punch Bowl."

— DAVE GILL. YOUTUBE: [THE PLAYBOY CLUB, LONDON](#)

The main booking agent for Jesters was **Roy Tipper Entertainments**, based in **Skegness, Lincolnshire**. It was through Roy Tipper that the majority of the club's headline acts were sourced. For the Christmas shows specifically, production was additionally handled by **JAVA Management of Doncaster**, run by **Jean Allen**, who assembled the large multi-act bills evidenced by the 1974 programme.

"One of these establishments, which many of us will still remember with great affection, was the Jesters Nightclub which soon became, not just a local, but national attraction with audiences coming by coach from all parts of the country."

— JULIA ASHBY, MEXBOROUGH AND DISTRICT HERITAGE SOCIETY, 2017

III. The Venue & Management

A Jesters advertisement in the *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times* of 28 February 1976 confirms that the club comprised at least **four distinct named areas**: the **Restaurant**, the **Cabaret room**, the **Disco Lounge**, and the **New Amsterdam Bar**. The advertisement also gives the first confirmed sighting of the **Jesters Club logo** — a grinning jester character in motley with bells on his hat — the club's own graphic identity. The address and telephone number (Manvers Road, Mexborough. Tel. 3867/8) match the business card exactly.

The ownership structure of Jesters is now established. The club was owned by **Punch Bowl Entertainments**, which was itself a subsidiary of **Mansfield Brewery** — one of the largest independent breweries in Britain, founded in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire in 1855 and publicly listed on the London Stock Exchange from 1935. Punch Bowl Entertainments was a substantial regional entertainment operation in its own right, managing an extensive portfolio across Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire: **20 retail establishments** (including four major entertainment clubs) and **5 hotels**. The four clubs were: the **Aquarius, Chesterfield**; **Jesters, Mexborough**; **Ozzie's Night Owl at Sheffield Wednesday FC** (Hillsborough); and the **Windmill at Rotherham United FC** (Millmoor). This places Jesters within a carefully assembled circuit of prestige entertainment venues spanning South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire — not an isolated cabaret club but one flagship in a deliberately constructed regional network.

Day-to-day management was in the hands of **P. D. Gill** — known as Dave Gill — confirmed as "Jester's promotion boss" in contemporary press and as "P. D. Gill, Manager" on the club's own business card. The card also gives the club's telephone number: **Mexborough 3867/8** (a two-line exchange). Gill operated with evident autonomy in his programming decisions, as his direct quotes in the local press demonstrate. The main booking agent for the club's regular programme was **Roy Tipper Entertainments of Skegness**, whose reach across the East Midlands, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire circuits gave Jesters access to the full breadth of touring talent its remarkable roster reflects. For the Christmas shows specifically, production was additionally handled by **JAVA Management's Jean Allen** of Doncaster.

The connection to the **Aquarius in Chesterfield** is particularly significant. The Aquarius was the brainchild of J. D. Williamson — Jack Williamson, the Dunkirk veteran and Military Cross holder who was also a director of Punch Bowl Entertainments. The Aquarius kept going until the early 1990s, outlasting Jesters by fifteen years. It has since been the subject of a dedicated National Lottery Heritage Fund archive and oral history project. That the Aquarius and Jesters were sister venues in the same corporate family — both opened in November 1972, both under Jack Williamson's directorship — reframes both: they were complementary parts of a carefully considered circuit. A photograph of Dave Gill with **George Naufahu** — "Tongan George," the Aquarius's former boxer doorman, who worked the doors of the club for many years — is testament to the lasting friendships formed across the Punch Bowl Entertainments network. Just as Tommy Joyce MBE, the Commonwealth Games bronze medallist boxer, kept order at Jesters — and boxed professionally there during his career — the Aquarius had its own former boxer at the door. Roy Tipper Entertainments in Skegness, as the main booking agent for Jesters, very likely served the wider Punch Bowl circuit too.

A personal photograph of Dave and Sheila Gill taken in the **Disco bar** — the bar area adjacent to the main room — reveals this area of the interior. The Friday night disco was held in the **main club cabaret room** itself, not in a separate area. The Disco bar featured **bold flock wallpaper** in pink and magenta on white, and **dark purple illuminated decorative wall panels** — a thoroughly 1970s interior entirely of its era.

The Punch Bowl Entertainments operation was supported by an exceptional area manager: **Mick Pickard**. He is identified in the corporate documents as **M. Pickard**, signing the 7 October 1974 thank-you letter to Dave Gill "for Director — Retail Trade." Dave Gill describes him as "incredibly lucky to have" — a man whose "knowledge was second to none and simply indispensable." Mick Pickard brought to Punch Bowl a remarkable track record in entertainment management: time at the **Derbyshire Miners' Holiday Camp** in Skegness — the pioneering welfare holiday complex opened in 1939 for Derbyshire coal miners and their families, which by the 1970s offered full cabaret entertainment programmes — and years at the helm of the **Poco Poco Club in Stockport** (formally the Poco a Poco Club and Casino, Heaton Norris, opened December 1968), one of the most celebrated cabaret and entertainment venues in Greater Manchester, which hosted David Bowie in 1970 and formed part of a distinguished circuit including the Golden Garter and The Domino Club. Pickard is independently confirmed as management at the Poco Poco by the club's own published history. His combination of

mining community entertainment experience and big-city cabaret management made him ideal for overseeing the Punch Bowl circuit across Derbyshire and Yorkshire.

Among the directors of Punch Bowl Entertainments, one figure stands apart as a man of exceptional personal history: **Jack Williamson** — listed on the company letterhead as **J. D. T. Williamson M.C., F.H.C.I.** The initials tell a story. **M.C.** is the **Military Cross**, one of the British Army's highest decorations for gallantry in action, awarded to officers for acts of exemplary bravery in the face of the enemy. Jack Williamson earned his during the Second World War — and specifically, Dave Gill recalls, during the evacuation from Dunkirk in June 1940: Operation Dynamo, in which more than 338,000 Allied soldiers were evacuated from the beaches and harbour of Dunkirk between 26 May and 4 June 1940. For every seven men who got off those beaches, one became a prisoner of war. Jack Williamson was one of the 338,000 who made it.

In 1992, Dave Gill travelled with Jack Williamson on a bus returning from a golfing holiday in France — a journey that took them past Dunkirk. As the bus travelled down toward the coast, they were met with a beautiful, clear view of the sands. It was then that Jack Williamson began to describe a very different scene: he spoke of the German Messerschmitts screaming low over those same beaches, strafing the shoreline with machine-gun fire and targeting anything that moved. He was, Dave Gill recalls, a man who embodied the phrase "an officer and a gentleman" in every sense. And as he shared those vivid memories of the beach, the weight of that historic rescue — more than fifty years on — still brought tears to his eyes.

Jack Williamson's ambition for Punch Bowl Entertainments extended beyond what was achieved. He was in talks with **Hughie Green** — the Canadian-born host of ITV's *Opportunity Knocks*, Britain's most popular television talent show throughout the late 1960s and 1970s — to create a new club-based television talent show to be called ***Search for a Star***. Dave Gill was entrusted to carry the contracts personally to Hughie Green's London office. The show never came to fruition. But the fact that Jack Williamson — a Dunkirk veteran and Military Cross holder running a chain of South Yorkshire and Derbyshire entertainment venues — was negotiating at that level, with one of the most powerful figures in British television entertainment, speaks to the scale of his ambition and the reach of what Punch Bowl Entertainments might have become.

The International Clubland Talent Show, recorded for Yorkshire Television in September 1974, was what was achieved. *Search for a Star* with Hughie Green was what might have been. Both were the vision of the same man — J. D. T. Williamson, M.C., F.H.C.I. — who had survived Dunkirk and spent the rest of his life building things.

That a man who had stood on the beaches of Dunkirk in June 1940, been decorated for his conduct in the most desperate moments of the Second World War, and wept at the memory of it half a century later — should also be a director of the company that ran Jesters Club in Mexborough, booked The Drifters and Stéphane Grappelli, gave the mining communities of South Yorkshire somewhere to dance on a Friday night, and very nearly put a national television talent show on the air with Hughie Green — is one of the remarkable hidden

connections that local history so often contains. Jack Williamson, M.C., F.H.C.I., deserves his place in this record.

"A man who truly embodied the phrase 'officer and a gentleman.' As our bus travelled down toward the coast on our return from a golfing holiday in 1992, we were met with a beautiful, clear view of the sands at Dunkirk. It was then that Jack began to describe a very different scene — the German Messerschmitts screaming low over those same beaches, strafing the shoreline with machine-gun fire and targeting anything that moved. The weight of that historic rescue still brought tears to his eyes, more than fifty years on."

— DAVE GILL, ON JACK WILLIAMSON, DIRECTOR OF PUNCH BOWL ENTERTAINMENTS LTD., M.C., F.H.C.I.

"Jack Williamson was in talks with Hughie Green from Opportunity Knocks to start a new club show called Search for a Star. I was entrusted to take the contracts to Mr Green's office in London. We never managed to get it off the ground."

— DAVE GILL

The press cutting confirms Jesters offered **multiple distinct programming strands** — main cabaret, Friday night disco (continuous throughout the club's life), Sunday soul nights (tried and then discontinued c.1975), **professional wrestling nights**, **professional boxing** (Tommy Joyce MBE fought at Jesters during his career), **charity boxing tournaments** (a Charity Boxing and Cabaret Night featuring Richard Dunn — who had fought Muhammad Ali for the world heavyweight title — was held on 12 January 1977, organised by the Cross Daggers Boxing Club), **family entertainment** (The Wombles Christmas Cracker, December 1975), and **local community events** including a fashion show presented by **Madame Florence of Mexborough**. The breadth of the programme confirms Jesters as the primary large-scale public venue serving the Mexborough community — not merely a nightclub but a full community entertainment and events space.

The press cutting also confirms that simultaneously: a main cabaret room for headline acts — which also served as the venue for the **Friday night disco and dance night** (held in the main room itself, continuing throughout the club's life); and a **Sunday soul night** (subsequently discontinued — see Section VIII). This multi-strand approach was sophisticated for a venue of its size and reflects both the ambition of Dave Gill's management and the financial backing that Mansfield Brewery ownership provided.

The press cutting also confirms that ticket enquiries were "being received from areas well outside the area" — vindicating the Heritage Society's later description of Jesters as a "national attraction." The club's capacity appears to have been sufficient to accommodate a "capacity audience" that was worth advertising in advance, suggesting a room of meaningful scale.

The Punch Bowl Entertainments circuit — confirmed in full from the 1974 brochure

- ♦ **Mansfield Brewery Co. Ltd** — parent company. Founded 1855, Littleworth, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Publicly listed from 1935. Acquired by Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries 1999; brewery demolished 2008.
- ♦ **Punch Bowl Entertainments Company Limited** — Registered No. 186448 England. Trading address: Regal Chambers, Cavendish Street, Chesterfield S40 1UY. Tel: Chesterfield 2221. Directors: A. J. Scruby T.D. · H. G. T. Chalmers F.H.C.I. · D. T. N. Tyne F.C.A. · **J. D. T. Williamson M.C., F.H.C.I.** (Jack Williamson — Dunkirk veteran, Military Cross holder)
- ♦ **Retail division — 20 establishments (telephone numbers as listed in 1974 brochure):**
Apollo Tavern, Sutton-in-Ashfield (4006) · **Aquarius, Chesterfield (70188/9)** · Bell & Anchor, Scunthorpe (62979) · Bowl in Hand, Mansfield (21841) · Derwent Arms, Carver, Brindleford (30242) · Eclipse, Mansfield (26832) · Elm Tree Inn, Heath (85490) · Gardeners Arms, Chesterfield (3088) · Gt. Northern Hotel, Shirebrook (2427) · **Jesters, Mexborough (3867)** · Keresforth Hall, Barnsley (4226) · Oval, Sutton-in-Ashfield (3273) · **Ozzie Nite Owl, Sheffield (340482)** · Palais de Danse, Mansfield (25192) · Pike & Heron, Tinsley, Sheffield (42916) · Railway Inn, Kirkby-in-Ashfield (3369) · Rufford Arms, Mansfield (23286) · Swan Hotel, Mansfield (24131) · Willington House Hotel, Repton (2104) · **Windmill Club, Rotherham (72988)**
- ♦ **Hotels division — 5 establishments:**
Station Hotel, Chesterfield (71141) · Dukeries, Edwinstowe (822655) · Grouse & Claret, Rowsley (3233) · Hollingwood Hotel, Staveley (872246) · Van Dyk, Clowne (810219)
- ♦ **Dave Gill (P. D. Gill)** — Manager of Jesters (July 1974 – 2 April 1977); subsequently Manager of the Windmill Club (1977–78)
- ♦ **Mick Pickard** — Area Manager, Punch Bowl Entertainments. Previously at the Derbyshire Miners' Holiday Camp, Skegness, and management of the Poco Poco Club, Stockport. Described by Dave Gill as "incredibly lucky to have — his knowledge was second to none and simply indispensable."



IV. The Northern Cabaret Scene

To understand Jesters one must understand the extraordinary moment in British popular culture within which it operated. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a transformation of the working men's club movement: at their peak in the 1970s, some 4,000 such clubs operated across Britain, and the touring acts they sustained gave venues like Jesters an extraordinary depth of talent to draw from. Private cabaret clubs offered a more glamorous tier above the traditional concert room, with professional lighting, waitress service, proper kitchens, and a dedicated stage.

The talent ecosystem was remarkable. Granada Television's *The Comedians* (1971) and *The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club* (1974–77) brought the club concert-room world into every living room in Britain, vastly increasing the appeal of seeing these acts live. The circuit

fed television, and television fed the circuit: an appearance on *Wheeltappers* could double a performer's booking fee overnight. The 1974 Jesters Christmas show — featuring Paul Shane and Stan Richards, both of whom would achieve that televisual breakthrough within a few years — perfectly illustrates how the circuit functioned as a nursery for national talent.

Comedy and pop/soul music were the twin pillars of the northern cabaret experience, and Jesters offered both. The press cutting reveals a booking philosophy that mixed popular local cover bands (Bitter Suite, Drifting Harmony) with the established touring acts of the national circuit. Dave Gill clearly understood his audience and programme accordingly.



V. Primary Source: The International Clubland Talent Show, September 1974

Three pages of the souvenir brochure for the Grand Final of **The International Clubland Talent Show** are now in hand — and together they provide a complete account of one of the most significant events in Jesters' history. On **Sunday 29 September 1974**, Jesters Nite Club hosted the Grand Final of a major regional talent competition, recorded for **Yorkshire Television**, jointly presented by Mansfield Brewery and Punch Bowl Entertainments Ltd.

The prizes were presented by **Mr. R. W. Chadborn, Chairman of Mansfield Brewery** — the most senior figure in the entire corporate structure appearing in person at Jesters. The compere for the televised evening was **Norman Vaughan** — the nationally beloved comedian and television presenter, Royal Variety performer, and voice of the Cadbury's Roses advertisements ("Swinging!" / "Dodgy!"). The judging panel comprised five distinguished industry figures: **Norman Collier** (T.V. Comedian, Royal Command performer — also confirmed as a Jesters performer in his own right); **James Dowde** (Editor, *Club Mirror*); **Bob Hart** (Music Editor, *The Sun*); **Peter Heppel** (Editor, *The Stage*); and **Ken Irwin** (T.V. Columnist, *Daily Mirror*).

Seven acts competed in the Grand Final, drawn from the best performers across 40 preliminary heat venues. Among them: **Diamond Boys** (Musical Comedy) — confirmed as a booked act at Jesters after the competition. And **Al Showman** (Comedian) — Dave Gill believes Al Showman won the first prize of **£5,000**. A performance photograph believed to show Al Showman on the Jesters stage — in his distinctive tan suit with brown velvet trim, holding a dark hat — captures him returning to Jesters as a booked act after his win, one of the prize cabaret contracts made real.

The complete programme for the evening — 29 September 1974

- ♦ **6.00 p.m. - 7.45 p.m.** — Food and drinks available
- ♦ **7.45 p.m. - 8.00 p.m.** — Warm-up
- ♦ **8.00 p.m. - 9.30 p.m.** — Televising of show and presentation of prizes by **Mr. R. W. Chadborn, Chairman, Mansfield Brewery**
- ♦ **9.30 p.m. - 11.00 p.m.** — Food and drinks available, plus dancing

The seven Grand Finalists

- ♦ **Touch of Class** — Dance Troupe
- ♦ **The D-Uvals** — Magicians
- ♦ **Sam Homer** — Vocalist
- ♦ **Diamond Boys** — Musical Comedy
- ♦ **Christy "G"** — Vocalist
- ♦ **Al Showman** — Comedian
- ♦ **Fresh Ground** — Group (Trio)

The Grand Final judges

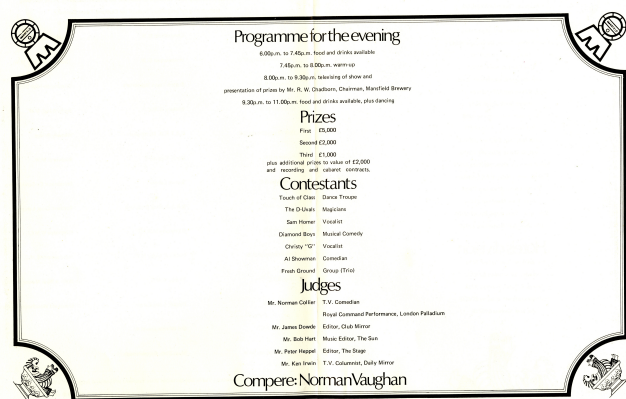
- ♦ **Mr. Norman Collier** — T.V. Comedian; Royal Command Performance, London Palladium. Also confirmed as a Jesters performer in his own right — the only individual to appear in both the judging panel and the Jesters performance archive.
- ♦ **Mr. James Dowde** — Editor, *Club Mirror*
- ♦ **Mr. Bob Hart** — Music Editor, *The Sun*
- ♦ **Mr. Peter Heppel** — Editor, *The Stage*
- ♦ **Mr. Ken Irwin** — T.V. Columnist, *Daily Mirror*

Key personnel — now fully confirmed

- ♦ **Compere: Norman Vaughan** — comedian, TV presenter, Royal Variety performer; famous for "Swinging!" and "Dodgy!"
- ♦ **Prize presenter: Mr. R. W. Chadborn** — Chairman, Mansfield Brewery
- ♦ **Competition Co-ordinator: Mr. R. Tipper** — Roy Tipper, Roy Tipper Entertainments, Skegness
- ♦ **Yorkshire Television producer: Mr. David Millard**
- ♦ **Preliminary heat judges: Mr. P. Bellamy · Mr. C. Hudson · Mr. G. Payne**
- ♦ **Preliminary heats: 40 venues** across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire



Cover: Souvenir brochure, *The International Clubland Talent Show Grand Final*, Jesters Nite Club, Mexborough, Sunday 29 September 1974. Presented by Mansfield Brewery with Punch Bowl Entertainments. Recorded for Yorkshire Television. Prize fund £10,000.



Programme for the Evening — centre pages of the souvenir brochure. Confirms the running order (6 p.m.-11 p.m.); all seven contestants; all five Grand Final judges including Norman Collier; compere Norman Vaughan; and prize presenter R. W. Chadborn, Chairman of Mansfield Brewery. The Mansfield Brewery double-arch M logo appears in all four corners.

Acknowledgements

Mansfield Brewery and their associate, Punch Bowl Entertainments would like to acknowledge the co-operation and hospitality extended to them and the artists competing, at the following clubs during the preliminary heats of the Clubland Talent Contest.

Warop M.W.	Cherterfield M.W.	Hucknall Constitutional
Mansfield Colliery M.W.	Holmewood M.W.	Thynsday Colliery M.W.
Stairforth W.M.C.	Sutton Town Supporters	Brimington High Street
Calverton M.W.	Wakley W.M.C.	Barford Hall M.W.
East Hemmingthorpe S.C.	S.A.T.R.A. Nottingham	Wadley Bridge
Beighton S.C.	Derby Engineers	Blidworth M.W.
St. Phillips S.C.	Sutton Labour	Shirebrook Ex Servicemens
Offerton M.W.	B.R.S.A. West Bridgford	Portland Club, Loughth
Quesfield S.C.	Rainworth M.W.	Blithurpe W.M.C.
Church Warop M.W.	Hucknall Linby M.W.	Handsworth W.M.C.
Giltroyd S.C.	Timber W.M.C.	Wath & West Midston W.M.C.
Cotgrave M.W.	Zingari, Long Eaton	Mansfield Woodhouse Ex Servicemens
Hillfoot W.M.C.	Old Whittington M.W.	
Welleck Colliery M.W.	Blues Club, Gainsborough	

Our grateful thanks also go to our three excellent professional judges who officiated throughout the preliminary heats, and carried out this exacting task with such expertise and willingness.

Mr. P. Bellamy

Mr. C. Hudson

Mr. G. Payne

and also to Mr. R. Tipper, the Competition Co-Ordinator.

The grand final is being televised by Yorkshire Television. Producer Mr. David Millard.

Acknowledgements page. Lists all 40 clubs that hosted preliminary heats; names the three preliminary judges (Mr. P. Bellamy, Mr. C. Hudson, Mr. G. Payne); confirms Mr. R. Tipper (Roy Tipper) as Competition Co-ordinator; and confirms Yorkshire Television producer as Mr. David Millard.

Punch Bowl Entertainments Limited Retail division

Apollo Tavern, Sutton-in-Ashfield 4006

Aquarius, Chesterfield 70188/9

Bell & Anchor, Scunthorpe 62979

Boat in Hand, Mansfield 21841

Dorwent Arms, Carver, Brinsford 30242

Eclipse, Mansfield 26832

Elm Tree Inn, Heath 85480

Gardners Arms, Chesterfield 3008

Gl. Northern Hotel, Shirebrook 2427

Jesters, Moxborough 3667

Karstorth Hall, Barnsley 4226

Owl, Sutton-in-Ashfield 3273

Ozzie Nite Owl, Sheffield 340482

Palace de Danse, Mansfield 35182

Pike & Heron, Timber, Sheffield 42016

Railway Inn, Kirkby-in-Ashfield 3369

Rufford Arms, Mansfield 23286

Swan Hotel, Mansfield 24131

Willington House Hotel, Repton 2104

Windmill Club, Rotherham 72988

Hotels division

Station Hotel, Chesterfield 71141

Dukeries, Edwinstowe 822655

Grouse & Claret, Rowsley 3233

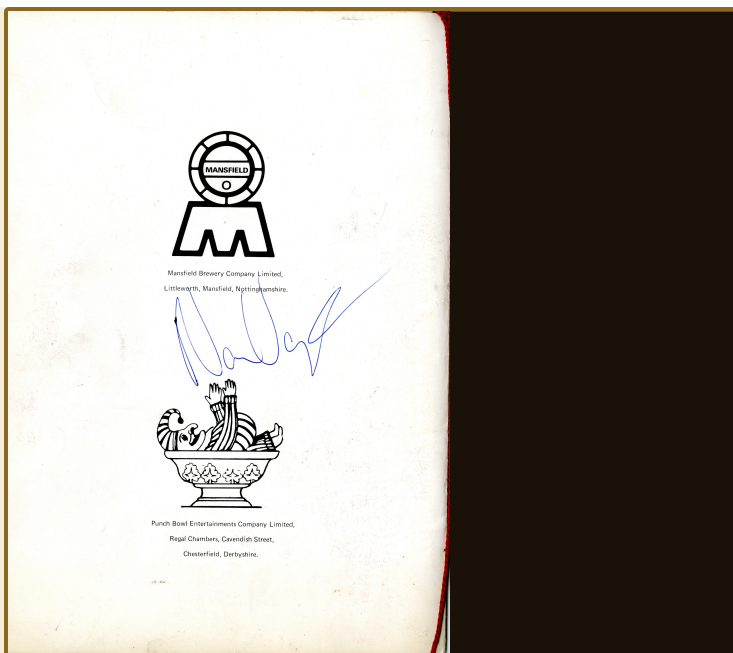
Hollingwood Hotel, Saxeley 872246

Van Dyk, Clowne 810219



Mansfield Brewery and Punch Bowl Entertainments hope you have a memorable and entertaining evening.

Back page of the talent show brochure: the complete official list of Punch Bowl Entertainments Limited establishments — Retail division (20 outlets, with telephone numbers, including Aquarius, Jesters, Ozzie Nite Owl and Windmill Club) and Hotels division (5 properties including Van Dyk, Clowne and Grouse & Claret, Rowsley). The Punch Bowl logo is displayed prominently. Footer: "Mansfield Brewery and Punch Bowl Entertainments hope you have a memorable and entertaining evening."



The back cover of the souvenir brochure — Norman Vaughan's autograph, signed in blue ballpoint pen on the night of 29 September 1974. Above the signature: the Mansfield Brewery double-arch M logo and the company address — "Mansfield Brewery Company Limited, Littleworth, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire." Below: the Punch Bowl cockerel-and-bowl logo and the address — "Punch Bowl Entertainments Company Limited, Regal Chambers, Cavendish Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire." Sheila Gill's personal copy of the brochure, kept for over fifty years. The signature of the man who compered the Yorkshire Television Grand Final at Jesters, written in the room where it happened.

"Swinging!"

— NORMAN VAUGHAN'S AUTOGRAPH ON THE BACK COVER OF THE SOUVENIR BROCHURE, JESTERS CLUB, MEXBOROUGH, 29 SEPTEMBER 1974. SHEILA GILL'S PERSONAL COPY, KEPT FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS.



V-B. Primary Source: The Yorkshire Television Thank-You Letter, October 1974

Two pages of the souvenir brochure for the Grand Final of **The International Clubland Talent Show** are now in hand — and together they answer almost every outstanding question about this remarkable event. On **Sunday 29 September 1974**, Jesters Nite Club was the venue for the Grand Final of a major regional talent competition, recorded for **Yorkshire Television**, jointly presented by Mansfield Brewery and Punch Bowl Entertainments Ltd.

The Acknowledgements page of the brochure reveals the full scale of the competition: heats were held at **40 working men's clubs and social clubs** spanning Nottinghamshire,

Derbyshire, South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire — the entire heartland of the Mansfield Brewery estate. The three professional judges who officiated throughout the heats were **Mr. P. Bellamy** (the Peter Bellamy acknowledged "in appreciation" in the Christmas show programme), **Mr. C. Hudson**, and **Mr. G. Payne**. The Competition Co-ordinator was **Mr. R. Tipper** — Roy Tipper of Roy Tipper Entertainments, Skegness, the main booking agent for Jesters himself. And the Yorkshire Television producer was named as **Mr. David Millard**.

The prize fund was extraordinary for its day: **£10,000 in total** — comprising a £5,000 first prize, £2,000 second prize, £1,000 third prize, plus recording and cabaret contracts to the value of a further £2,000. The Grand Final was by invitation only, commencing at 6 p.m.

What the brochure now confirms — in full

- ♦ Full title: **The International Clubland Talent Show**
- ♦ Presented jointly by: **Mansfield Brewery** and **Punch Bowl Entertainments**
- ♦ Venue: **Jesters Nite Club, Mexborough**
- ♦ Date: **Sunday 29 September 1974, commencing 6 p.m., by invitation only**
- ♦ Television: Recorded for **Yorkshire Television** · Producer: **Mr. David Millard**
- ♦ Prize fund: **£10,000 total** — 1st £5,000 · 2nd £2,000 · 3rd £1,000 · plus Recording & Cabaret Contracts £2,000
- ♦ Competition Co-ordinator: **Mr. R. Tipper** — Roy Tipper of Roy Tipper Entertainments, Skegness
- ♦ Three professional judges throughout the heats: **Mr. P. Bellamy** · **Mr. C. Hudson** · **Mr. G. Payne**
- ♦ **40 venues hosted preliminary heats** across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire — see full list below

The 40 clubs that hosted preliminary heats

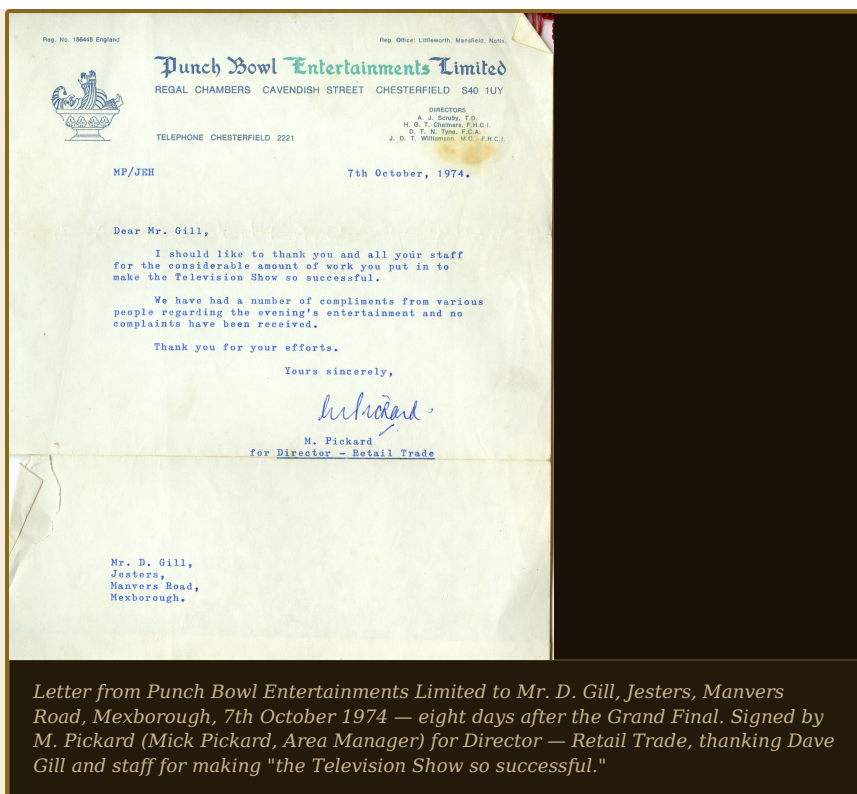
- ♦ Warsop M.W. · Chesterfield M.W. · Hucknall Constitutional
- ♦ Mansfield Colliery M.W. · Holmewood M.W. · Thoresby Colliery M.W.
- ♦ Stainforth W.M.C. · Sutton Town Supporters · Brimington High Street
- ♦ Calverton M.W. · Walkley W.M.C. · Basford Hall M.W.
- ♦ East Herringthorpe S.C. · S.A.T.R.A. Nottingham · Wadsley Bridge
- ♦ Beighton S.C. · Derby Engineers · Blidworth M.W.
- ♦ St. Phillips S.C. · Sutton Labour · Shirebrook Ex-Servicemens
- ♦ Ollerton M.W. · B.R.S.A. West Bridgford · Portland Club, Langwith
- ♦ Glenfield S.C. · Rainworth M.W. · Bilsthorpe W.M.C.
- ♦ Church Warsop M.W. · Hucknall Linby M.W. · Handsworth W.M.C.
- ♦ Gilroyd S.C. · Tinsley W.M.C. · Wath & West Melton W.M.C.
- ♦ Cotgrave M.W. · Zingari, Long Eaton · Mansfield Woodhouse Ex-Servicemens
- ♦ Hillfoot W.M.C. · Old Whittington M.W.
- ♦ Welbeck Colliery M.W. · Blues Club, Gainsborough

These 40 venues span the entire Mansfield Brewery estate territory — from Gainsborough in Lincolnshire to Tinsley and Walkley in Sheffield, from Stainforth in the Dearne Valley to Derby, Nottingham and the Nottinghamshire coalfield. Colliery welfare clubs, working men's clubs, social clubs, ex-servicemen's clubs and sports supporters' clubs — the full breadth of the industrial community entertainment circuit of the era.

The identity of Roy Tipper as Competition Co-ordinator is particularly significant. The man who booked the headline acts at Jesters as its main booking agent was simultaneously running the entire logistics of a 40-venue talent competition that culminated at Jesters itself. Roy Tipper Entertainments of Skegness was not merely a supplier to Punch Bowl Entertainments — it was a full creative and operational partner.

Peter Bellamy — named on the 1974 Christmas show programme "in appreciation" — is now confirmed as one of the three professional judges who travelled to all 40 heat venues. He was a central figure in the Punch Bowl entertainment operation, not merely an honorary name on a programme. Mr. C. Hudson and Mr. G. Payne complete the judging panel; their further details are not yet known.

Yorkshire Television producer **David Millard** is named for the first time. His production of the Grand Final at Jesters is the only known television broadcast from the club. The YTV archive, held at the Yorkshire Film Archive, should be approached for any surviving footage.



"I should like to thank you and all your staff for the considerable amount of work you put in to make the Television Show so successful. We have had a number of compliments from various people regarding the evening's entertainment and no complaints have been received."

— M. PICKARD (MICK PICKARD), FOR DIRECTOR — RETAIL TRADE, PUNCH BOWL ENTERTAINMENTS LIMITED, TO MR. D. GILL, JESTERS, 7 OCTOBER 1974

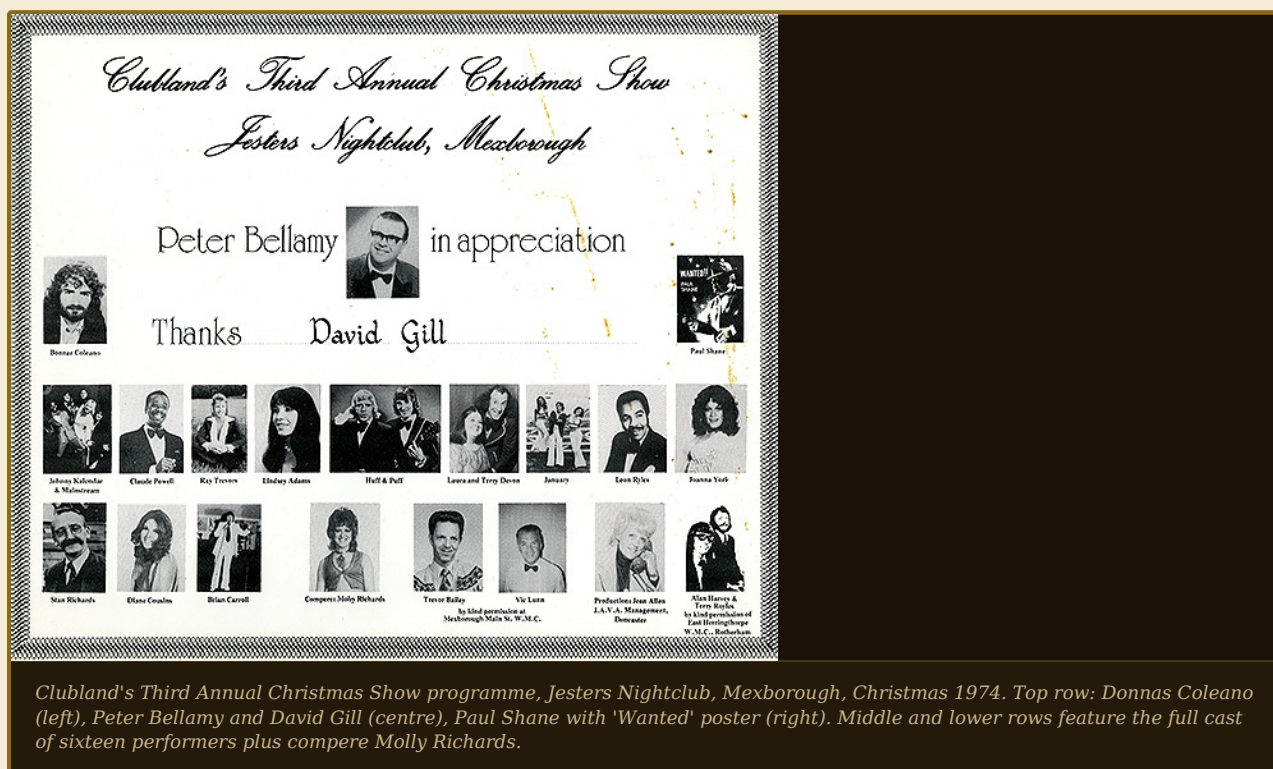


VI. Primary Source: The Christmas Show Programme, 1974

The most important primary source yet discovered for the history of Jesters is a promotional card or programme for **Clubland's Third Annual Christmas Show** at Jesters Nightclub, Mexborough. The document transforms our understanding of the club on multiple fronts.

What the programme confirms

- ♦ "Third Annual" Christmas Show places this document at **Christmas 1974** — meaning the First Annual Show was Christmas 1972 and the Second was Christmas 1973.
- ♦ Manager / promotion boss: **David (Dave) Gill** — acknowledged with "Thanks".
- ♦ Senior figure honoured: **Peter Bellamy** — "in appreciation" — likely the booker, producer or a key patron.
- ♦ Production company: **JAVA Management, Doncaster**, led by **Jean Allen**.
- ♦ Additional management credit: **Alan Harvey & Tony Richards**, via "JAVA subsidies" and a Rotherham W.M.C. connection.
- ♦ Compere: **Molly Richards** — a named resident compere, indicating professional production.
- ♦ Programme note: "by kind permission at Mexborough Main St. W.M.C." — the significance of this credit is not yet established.
- ♦ Seventeen named acts and crew on the bill, including two future television stars: **Paul Shane** (later *Hi-de-Hi!*) and **Stan Richards** (later *Emmerdale*).



Paul Shane (1940-2013)

Born George Frederick Speight in Thrybergh, near Rotherham. A former miner at Silverwood Colliery who turned professional entertainer after a 1967 pit accident. By 1974 he was, as IMDB records, "a well-established comedian on the club and cabaret circuit." His Yorkshire club experience was, as his *Hi-de-Hi!* co-star Su Pollard recalled, the "grain of truth" behind his most famous role — Ted Bovis, the hapless holiday camp comedian in the BBC sitcom (1980-88). The "Wanted" poster visible in his headshot was likely a comic prop from his act.

Stan Richards (1930-2005)

Born Stanley Richardson in Gawber, Barnsley. A veteran of the Yorkshire working men's club circuit for over

30 years — as pianist, band-leader (the Melody Maniacs, the Four Renowns), and solo comedian. In 1974 he was at the height of his club-circuit reputation, three years before Ken Loach cast him in *The Price of Coal* (BBC, 1977) and four years before he joined *Emmerdale Farm* as Seth Armstrong, a role he would play until his death.

VI. Primary Source: Local Press Cutting, c. August 1975

A second primary source — a cutting from "**YOU! With today's top sounds**", an entertainment supplement of the **South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times**, the Mexborough-based newspaper — contains two separate stories about Jesters and provides a vivid snapshot of the club's programming and business decisions at what was probably the mid-point of its life: most likely **summer 1975**, given the August 7th event date and the overall context.



"YOU! With today's top sounds" — entertainment supplement of the South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times, Mexborough, c.1975. Story: "Dual bill at club" — Bitter Suite and Drifting Harmony, August 7th. Dave Gill is named as "Jester's promotion boss." The photograph shows Drifting Harmony.

"Dual bill at club"

Two of the most popular groups in local clubs — **Bitter Suite** and **Drifting Harmony**, both of whom "play cover versions of hit singles" — have been signed for a one-night show by "Jester's promotion boss Dave Gill." The event is scheduled for **August 7th** (almost certainly 1975).

Dave Gill is quoted directly: "After witnessing the popularity of the two groups in working men's clubs, I thought the double billing would provide a perfect evening's entertainment all round." He adds: "Already ticket sales are well under way and we expect a capacity audience for the evening on August 7th. Enquiries are being received for tickets from areas well outside the area."

Bitter Suite was a Doncaster-area group that specialised in Tamla Motown and soul covers on the South Yorkshire working men's club circuit. The band notably shared a member — **John Parr** — with other local acts; Parr would later achieve an international hit with "St Elmo's Fire (Man in Motion)" in 1985. **Drifting Harmony** were a four-piece covers group, photographed for the article.

VIII. Primary Sources: South Yorkshire Times Advertisements, 1975-1976

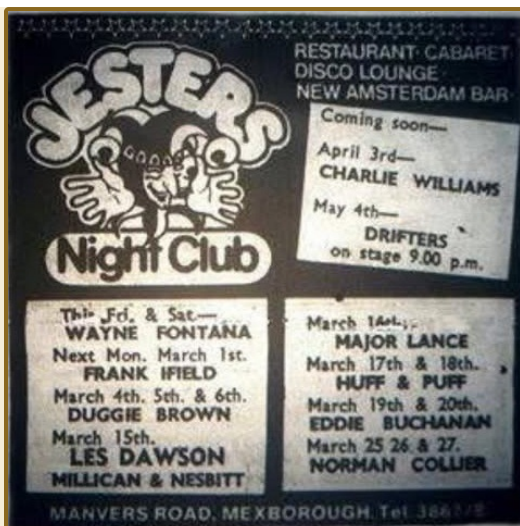
Three Jesters advertisements from the *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times* are now in hand — together constituting the most precisely documented run of programming in the club's entire history, covering December 1975 to May 1976. The advertisements were placed through Jesters' advertising agency: **Steve Moss Advertising, Sheffield.**

**THE
WOMBLES
CHRISTMAS
CRACKER**
starring
**THE WOMBLES OF
WIMBLEDON**
and their Special Guests
JESTERS
MEXBOROUGH
Tel. 3867
SUN., DEC. 21st
3 p.m. and 6 p.m.
and at
THE MAIN HALL
The Grandstand
Doncaster Racecourse
SAT., DEC. 20th
2 p.m. and 6 p.m.
A great show for all
the family.
TICKETS 75p
(Children & Adults)
Now on sale at Jesters
and Ashley Adams,
Scot Lane, Doncaster.

SYT, c. December 1975. "The Wombles Christmas Cracker." Jesters, Sunday 21 December — two performances: 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Tickets 75p. Also Doncaster Racecourse, Saturday 20 December.

JESTERS NIGHT CLUB
MANVERS ROAD,
MEXBOROUGH
Forthcoming attractions
Saturday, February 7th—
International star
MARTI CAINE
Wednesday, February 18th—
BITTER SUITE
DRIFTING HARMONY
LIGHT FANTASTIC
Sunday, February 22nd—
INTERNATIONAL YOUTH JAZZ ORCHESTRA
Monday, March 1st—
FRANK IFIELD
Tuesday, March 16th—
Direct from America
MAJOR LANCE
Tuesday, May 4th—
THE DRIFTERS
(on stage 9 o'clock)
For advance bookings phone
MEXBOROUGH 3867

SYT, c. late January 1976. Forthcoming: Marti Caine (7 Feb); triple bill (18 Feb); IYJO (22 Feb); Frank Ifield (1 Mar); Major Lance (16 Mar); The Drifters (4 May, 9 p.m.).



SYT, 28 February 1976. Confirms four venue areas; Jesters logo; Wayne Fontana, Duggie Brown, Les Dawson, Major Lance, Norman Collier, Charlie Williams (3 Apr), The Drifters (4 May, 9 p.m.).

Combined booking diary — December 1975 to May 1976 (from three South Yorkshire Times advertisements)

- ✦ **Saturday 20 December 1975** — The Wombles Christmas Cracker at Doncaster Racecourse Grandstand (2 p.m. & 6 p.m.)
- ✦ **Sunday 21 December 1975** — The Wombles Christmas Cracker at Jesters (3 p.m. & 6 p.m.)
- ✦ **Saturday 7 February 1976** — Marti Caine ("International star")
- ✦ **Wednesday 18 February 1976** — Bitter Suite · Drifting Harmony · Light Fantastic (triple bill)
- ✦ **Sunday 22 February 1976** — International Youth Jazz Orchestra
- ✦ **Friday & Saturday, late February 1976** — Wayne Fontana
- ✦ **Monday 1 March 1976** — Frank Ifield
- ✦ **Thursday 4-Saturday 6 March 1976** — Duggie Brown
- ✦ **Sunday 14 or Tuesday 16 March 1976** — Major Lance ("Direct from America")
- ✦ **Sunday 15 March 1976** — Les Dawson & Millican and Nesbitt
- ✦ **Wednesday 17-Thursday 18 March 1976** — Huff & Puff
- ✦ **Friday 19-Saturday 20 March 1976** — Eddie Buchanan
- ✦ **Wednesday 25-Friday 27 March 1976** — Norman Collier
- ✦ **Saturday 3 April 1976** — Charlie Williams
- ✦ **Tuesday 4 May 1976** — The Drifters (on stage 9 p.m.)

Nearly five months of confirmed programming, December 1975 to May 1976 — the most completely documented stretch of Jesters' booking history.

What this advertisement confirms

The Jesters logo — a grinning jester character in motley with bells on his hat — appears for the first time in any primary source. This was the club's own graphic identity, used in its advertising.

Four named areas of the venue: Restaurant · Cabaret · Disco Lounge · New Amsterdam Bar.

The New Amsterdam Bar is named here for the first time — a third distinct bar or lounge area within Jesters, alongside the Disco bar confirmed by the photograph of Dave and Sheila Gill.

The Drifters dated to 4 May 1976 — "on stage 9.00 p.m." — replacing the previously estimated November 1976 date. This also places The Drifters appearance just one month after the Brotherhood of Man Eurovision win on 3 April 1976.

Charlie Williams confirmed on 3 April 1976 — previously attributed, now confirmed with a precise date. The same night as Brotherhood of Man's Eurovision win.

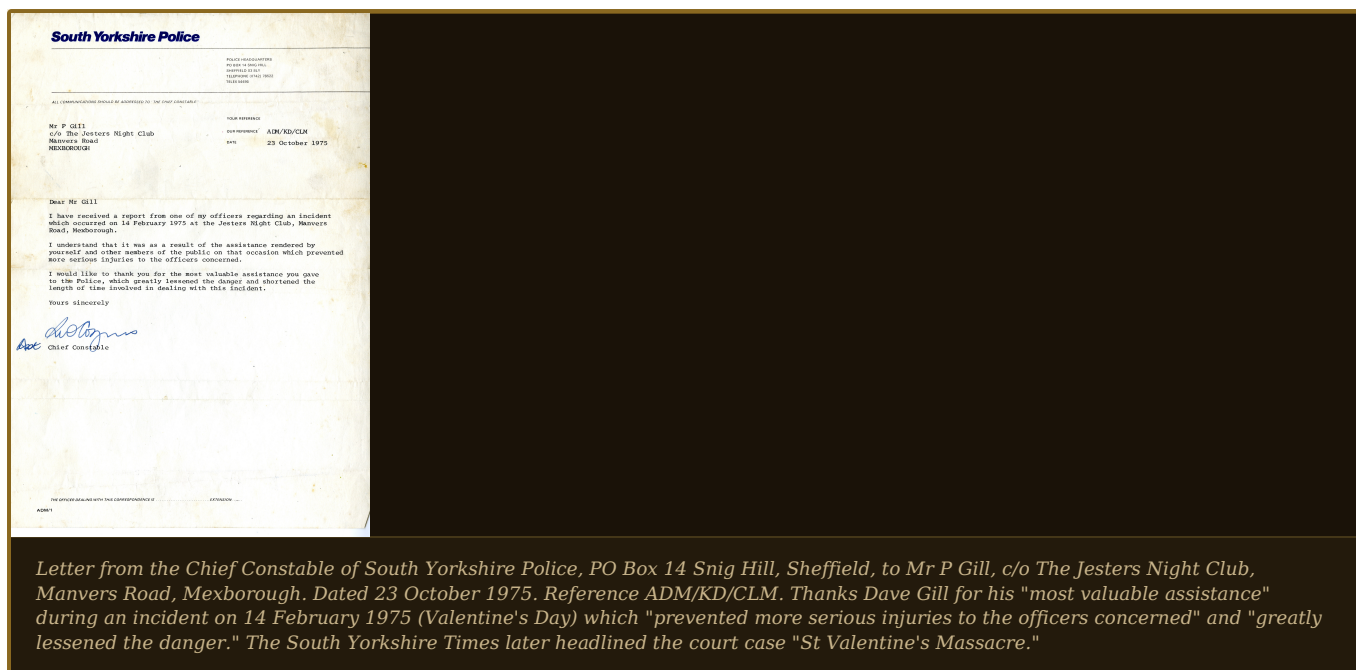
Five new confirmed acts: Wayne Fontana · Les Dawson · Millican & Nesbitt · Major Lance · Eddie Buchanan.

Six previously confirmed acts re-confirmed with dates: Frank Ifield (1 March) · Duggie Brown (4–6 March) · Huff & Puff (17–18 March) · Norman Collier (25–27 March) · Charlie Williams (3 April) · The Drifters (4 May).



IX. Primary Source: The South Yorkshire Police Letter, 23 October 1975 — The St Valentine's Massacre

A letter from the **Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police** to Dave Gill, dated **23 October 1975**, is one of the most personally significant documents in the entire Jesters archive. It records an incident on **Valentine's Day — 14 February 1975** — at Jesters Night Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. The *South Yorkshire Times* and *Mexborough & Swinton Times* ran the headline "**St Valentine's Massacre**" after the subsequent court case at Sheffield Crown Court — all stemming from a stag party that had been at the club that night.



Letter from the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police, PO Box 14 Snig Hill, Sheffield, to Mr P Gill, c/o The Jesters Night Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. Dated 23 October 1975. Reference ADM/KD/CLM. Thanks Dave Gill for his "most valuable assistance" during an incident on 14 February 1975 (Valentine's Day) which "prevented more serious injuries to the officers concerned" and "greatly lessened the danger." The South Yorkshire Times later headlined the court case "St Valentine's Massacre."

The full text of the letter

"Dear Mr Gill,

I have received a report from one of my officers regarding an incident which occurred on 14 February 1975 at the Jesters Night Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough.

I understand that it was as a result of the assistance rendered by yourself and other members of the public on that occasion which prevented more serious injuries to the officers concerned.

I would like to thank you for the most valuable assistance you gave to the Police, which greatly lessened the danger and shortened the length of time involved in dealing with this incident.

Yours sincerely, [signed] Chief Constable"

What happened — Dave Gill's account

Jesters always took a deposit from stag parties, refundable at the end of the night provided there was no trouble. On this occasion — Valentine's Day, 14 February 1975 — the deposit had already been refunded, because everything inside the club had been fine. It was only after closing, once the stag party was outside, that it all kicked off.

Dave Gill was not fully aware of how one of the men came to be arrested. But by the time he got outside, two police officers were struggling to get the man into the patrol car. He had wedged himself in the door frame and was shouting for his mates to come and pull him free.

Dave Gill and **Tommy Joyce MBE** — the Commonwealth Games bronze medallist boxer who was also a member of the Jesters security team — moved to block the path and stop the rest of the stag party piling in. The moment the arrested man started calling for his friends to "get him out of it," that alone constituted affray.

The man was sentenced to **three years in prison** at Sheffield Crown Court. Dave Gill felt genuinely sorry for him — he was not a hardened criminal, he just wanted to go home. But once it had reached that point, there was no turning back.

The *South Yorkshire Times* and *Mexborough & Swinton Times* ran the court case under the headline "**St Valentine's Massacre.**"

"We always took a deposit from stag parties, refundable at the end of the night provided there was no trouble. The deposit had already been refunded — everything inside the club had been fine. It was only after closing, once they were outside, that it all kicked off. Me and Tommy Joyce blocked the path to stop the rest of the stag party piling in. He ended up being sentenced to three years in prison. I genuinely felt sorry for him — he wasn't a hardened criminal, he just wanted to go home. But once it reached that point, there was no turning back."

— DAVE GILL, ON THE VALENTINE'S DAY 1975 INCIDENT AT JESTERS

What this confirms

- ♦ The police letter of 23 October 1975 now has its full context: the **Valentine's Day 1975 stag party incident**, which resulted in a court case at Sheffield Crown Court and a headline in the *South Yorkshire Times* — "**St Valentine's Massacre**"
- ♦ Dave Gill and **Tommy Joyce MBE** — the security professional and Commonwealth Games boxer — directly intervened to protect the police officers, preventing the rest of the stag party from freeing the arrested man
- ♦ Jesters' policy of taking refundable deposits from stag parties — and the fact the deposit had already been returned — confirms the professionalism of the club's management and the good behaviour inside the venue that night
- ♦ The incident confirms the Jesters address in official South Yorkshire Police correspondence: "**The Jesters Night Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough**"



IX. Primary Source: The Drifters Performance Photograph, November 1976

A colour performance photograph taken inside Jesters during The Drifters' appearance in November 1976 is the only known photograph of a live performance at the club. It is the most evocative image in the entire archive — the moment Jesters existed for, captured in a single frame.



*The Drifters performing at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. The American soul group appeared at Jesters on **two separate occasions** — confirmed by the *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times* advertisement of 28 February 1976 (May 4th, on stage 9 p.m.) and by broadcastbarnsley.wordpress.com. A performer — in a red/orange suit with black piping and bow tie — leans from the stage towards the outstretched arms of the audience. Other members of the group are visible behind him. The Jesters interior décor is clearly seen: ornate panelled walls with gold-framed circular and rectangular decorative motifs. The drum kit is visible stage left. One of only two known photographs of a live performance at Jesters.*

The only performance photograph

This photograph does what no document can: it shows Jesters alive. A performer from The Drifters, leaning forward from the stage in a red/orange suit, reaching towards the hands of the Mexborough audience — and those hands reaching back — is the defining image of everything the club represented. This is what Dave Gill built. This is what Roy Tipper Entertainments made possible. This is what Punch Bowl Entertainments Ltd. and Mansfield Brewery invested in.

The photograph also gives us our first clear view of the **Jesters interior**. The stage backdrop reveals a formally decorated room: ornate panelled walls with gold-framed circular and rectangular decorative motifs on a dark background — not a bare function room but a properly appointed cabaret space of real theatrical quality. The drum kit is visible stage left. The room is set cabaret-fashion, the audience close to the stage.

The Drifters — twice at Jesters

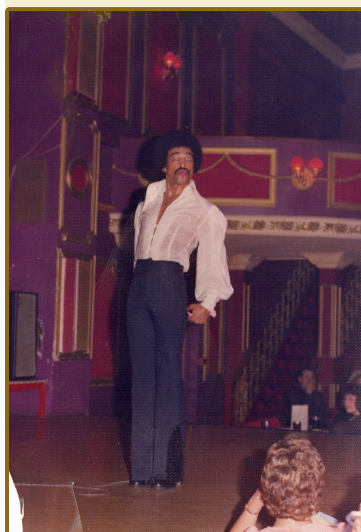
The American soul group — formed in New York in 1953, responsible for "Under the Boardwalk," "Up on the Roof," "There Goes My Baby," and "Saturday Night at the Movies" — performed at Jesters on **two separate occasions**. The first is confirmed by the *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times* advertisement of 28 February 1976, billing them for **4 May 1976**, on stage at 9 p.m. The second is confirmed by broadcastbarnsley.wordpress.com. Their 1973 UK No.1 "Like Sister and Brother" and 1974 No.2 "Kissin' in the Back Row of the Movies" had made them a household name to a new generation of British fans. Two Drifters bookings at a single South Yorkshire cabaret club speak to the quality of the relationship between Roy Tipper Entertainments and the acts they could deliver to Manvers Road, Mexborough.



IX. Primary Source: Tommy Hunt Performance Photograph, c.1976-77

A second colour performance photograph — Tommy Hunt on the Jesters stage — is the richest visual

record of the club's interior yet discovered. Where the Drifters photograph captures the electricity between performer and audience, the Tommy Hunt photograph captures the room itself: the stage, the décor, the lighting, the atmosphere that Dave Gill and Punch Bowl Entertainments created on Manvers Road, Mexborough.



Tommy Hunt performing at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough, c.1976-77. White open-necked shirt, dark flared trousers, large afro — the image of mid-1970s soul. Behind him, the Jesters interior is revealed in its fullest detail yet: deep crimson and gold panelled walls, decorative gold friezes, red wall sconces, what appears to be a Jester or comedy mask motif in the upper panel, gold stage curtaining, and a professional lighting rig overhead. The audience is seated cabaret-fashion close to the stage. Several audience members and their table settings are visible bottom right.

The Jesters interior — revealed

This photograph tells us more about the physical character of Jesters than any other document in the archive. The room is decorated throughout in **deep crimson and gold** — the colours of theatre, of glamour, of a venue that meant business. The back wall behind the stage comprises large decorative panels in dark red with gold framing and gold ornamental friezes running between them. Red wall sconces provide atmospheric lighting. The upper right panel appears to carry a **Jester or comedy mask motif** in gold on red — entirely appropriate to the club's name and perhaps its own designed emblem.

Gold stage curtaining is visible on the right, framing what may be an exit or dressing room access. A professional **theatrical lighting rig** is visible overhead top left. The stage is a properly raised platform. The audience sits at tables set cabaret-fashion, close to the stage — drinks and table settings visible. This is not a converted pub function room. This is a purpose-designed, professionally fitted entertainment venue of real quality, created within the Mansfield Brewery and Punch Bowl Entertainments investment.

Tommy Hunt at Jesters

Tommy Hunt — born Charles Hunt in Birmingham, Alabama in 1933, later resident in Pontefract, West Yorkshire — stands centre stage in full command, white shirt open at the chest, large natural afro framing his face, the complete image of mid-1970s soul showmanship. At the peak of his UK chart success with "Crackin' Up" (No.39, 1975), "Loving on the Losing Side" (No.28, 1976) and "One Fine Morning" (No.44, 1976), and a confirmed booking at Jesters as evidenced by the promotional poster board in the staff photograph, this performance was one of the finest soul nights Mexborough had ever seen.



X. Primary Source: Norman Collier — Backstage at Jesters

A third colour photograph from the Jesters archive shows **Norman Collier** backstage — or in a dressing room or side room — at the club, clowning at an upright piano with his characteristic wide-eyed, delighted expression. It is a candid snapshot rather than a performance photograph, but it captures the personality of one of the great northern comedians with complete fidelity. The expression on his face is, essentially, his entire act in a single frame.



Norman Collier backstage at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough, c.1972–1977. In grey checked suit with wide lapels and flared trousers, purple kipper tie, and a small novelty badge on his lapel, he turns from an upright piano to face the camera with the wide-eyed, delighted expression that was the hallmark of his comedy. A candid backstage or dressing-room snapshot — the kind of informal moment that captures a performer's personality more vividly than any stage photograph.

Norman Collier (1925–2013)

Born in Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire, on Christmas Day 1925. He was best known for his "faulty microphone" routine and his chicken impressions. Jimmy Tarbuck dubbed him "the comedian's comedian." He came to national attention after a successful appearance at the Royal Variety Command Performance in 1971, and was a fixture on *The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club* throughout its run.

A detail of particular significance for the Jesters history: Collier was the originator of the "club chairman" character later popularised by Colin Crompton in the ITV series *Wheeltappers and Shunters Club*. Both Norman Collier — the originator — and Colin Crompton — the man who made the character nationally famous — are confirmed performers at Jesters. The audience who saw both men on the same Manvers Road stage were watching comedy history from very close range.

The photograph shows Collier in the grey checked suit and purple kipper tie of the era, a small novelty badge on his lapel, twisted round from an upright piano backstage with that irrepressible, wide-eyed grin. People would be permanently laughing whenever they were around him — and the photograph entirely bears that out. He died on 14 March 2013, aged 87, after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. His funeral was attended by many fellow comedians including Russ Abbot, Roy Hudd, and Tommy Cannon and Bobby Ball — all of whom, bar Hudd, are also confirmed at Jesters.



XI. Primary Source: Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee — On Stage at Jesters

A fourth colour performance photograph from the Jesters archive shows **Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee** on the Jesters stage — mid-routine, both giving a shared mock military salute, Ricky Lee laughing upward, Ronnie Dukes holding his microphone. The photograph is the finest image yet of the Jesters stage curtaining and surround, and it documents the appearance at Jesters of one of the most celebrated acts on the entire South Yorkshire cabaret circuit — a Rotherham-born performer and his Sheffield-born wife, both Royal Variety performers, both *Wheeltappers* stars, on a Mexborough stage.



Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee performing at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. Both give a shared mock military salute mid-routine — Ronnie (left) in white shirt and black waistcoat, microphone in hand; Ricky (right) in flowing blue stage gown with cut-out neckline detail, laughing upward. A backing musician is partially visible bottom right. The Jesters stage curtaining — deep crimson with gold fringe trim and gold ornamental swag above — is seen in its fullest detail in any photograph from the archive.

Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee

Ronnie Duke was born in Rotherham, West Riding of Yorkshire. Ricky Lee was born Audrey Tomlinson in Attercliffe, Sheffield. In 1953 he met Audrey Tomlinson, who was singing opera songs at the time; he persuaded her to move to more modern songs and they formed an act together, and two years later they were married. Their act — self-described as "an extravaganza," billed as "King of Comedy and Queen of Song" — grew to include Ricky's mother Violet Tomlinson on piano as the silent butt of Ronnie's jokes, and eventually their sons on drums and bass.

Their appearances on the ITV variety show **The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club** led to a headline spot for Dukes and Lee at the Royal Variety Performance on 10 November 1975, hosted by Bruce Forsyth at the London Palladium. Ronnie Dukes was the subject of *This Is Your Life* in November 1975 — the first episode of Series 16 — with tributes from Larry Grayson, Ken Dodd, David Nixon and Bob Monkhouse, all of whom are also confirmed at Jesters.

A Rotherham man and a Sheffield woman performing on a Mexborough stage: Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee were the most locally rooted of all Jesters' headliners. By the beginning of the 1960s the basic framework of their act had been set and they had already built up a tremendous reputation in the South Yorkshire area. Jesters was, in a very real sense, their home ground. Ronnie Duke died of a heart attack while performing at Behan's West Park in Jersey on 7 June 1981, aged 49. Ricky Lee died in Jersey on 30 April 1986, aged 52. Both are buried at All Saints Church, Cawthorne, South Yorkshire.

The stage curtaining — confirmed in detail

This photograph gives the clearest view yet of the Jesters stage surround. The main curtains are confirmed as **deep crimson with gold fringe trim**. Above them runs a **gold ornamental swag or pelmet**. A **silver/gold lamé or tinsel curtain** forms part of the inner stage surround — the glittering backdrop partially visible in other performance photographs. Together with the crimson and gold wall panels seen in the Tommy Hunt photograph, the full theatrical character of Jesters as a purpose-designed cabaret room is now richly confirmed.



XII. Performance Photograph — Duggie Brown at Jesters

A colour performance photograph of **Duggie Brown** on the Jesters stage is among the most revealing images in the archive — not only as a record of a confirmed performer, but because it gives the widest and most complete view of the Jesters interior yet captured. Shot from further back in the room than any previous performance photograph, it shows the full depth of the venue for the first time.



Duggie Brown performing at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. Dark suit, white shirt and bow tie, dark collar-length hair — holding a handheld microphone, leaning forward into the audience with a broad grin. The photograph gives the widest view of the Jesters interior yet recorded: the polished wooden stage floor in the foreground; the audience seated at cabaret tables; a possible balcony or raised gallery level visible at the back of the room; the crimson and gold decorative wall panels; an ornamental frieze or rail with decorative pattern running across the back wall; red accent lighting in the upper corners; and coloured bar lighting visible to the left. A compere's stool is visible to the performer's right.

Duggie Brown (1940-2020)

Born in Rotherham, South Yorkshire — making him, like Ronnie Dukes, a performer with direct local roots in the community Jesters served. He appeared on *The Comedians* (Granada, 1971) and was a familiar face on the northern club circuit throughout the 1970s. He was the brother of actress Lynne Perrie, who played Ivy Tilsley in *Coronation Street* for many years. His easy, relaxed performance style — the grin, the easy lean forward, the handheld microphone trailing its lead — is perfectly captured in this photograph.

The Jesters interior — the widest view yet

This photograph transforms our understanding of the physical character of Jesters. Shot from the back of the room, it reveals the full depth of the venue. Most significantly, the upper portion of the image shows what appears to be a **raised gallery or balcony level** at the back — audience members are visible silhouetted at an upper level, separated from the main floor by a decorative rail or balustrade. If confirmed, this would significantly increase the estimated capacity of the venue and explain how Jesters could accommodate the "capacity audiences" drawing coaches from across the region that the contemporary press reported.

Also newly visible: the **polished wooden dance floor** extending in front of the stage; the **ornamental frieze or decorative band** running horizontally across the back wall above the gallery level, with what appears to be a repeating pattern or lettering; **red accent lighting** in the upper corners; and **coloured bar lighting** on the left side of the room — consistent with the bar being on the left as one faces the stage. A small stool or podium stand to the performer's right may be the compere's position.



XIII. Primary Source: Bobby Knutt & Dave Gill — Backstage at Jesters

A fifth colour photograph from the Jesters archive — and the most personally revealing yet — shows **Bobby Knutt** and **Dave Gill** together backstage, shaking hands and laughing. It is the only

photograph in the archive that places the manager and a named performer in the same frame, and it captures something that no document can: the warmth, the humour, the human relationship that made Jesters what it was.



Bobby Knutt (left) and Dave Gill (right) backstage at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. Bobby Knutt — in blue velvet suit with white ruffled dress shirt, glasses, moustache — pulls a comic face whilst shaking Gill's hand, his arm around Gill's shoulder. Dave Gill — in dinner jacket and black bow tie — grins broadly. A plain back-of-house setting: cream walls, radiator bottom left. The same backstage space where Norman Collier was photographed at the piano.

The manager and the comedian

This photograph places Dave Gill in the same frame as a named Jesters performer for the first time — and the chemistry between the two men is instantly apparent. Bobby Knutt, in full performance regalia — blue velvet suit, enormous white lapels, magnificent ruffled dress shirt — is pulling a classic comic face whilst shaking Gill's hand and resting his arm across his shoulder. Gill is grinning broadly, clearly delighted. It is the image of a relationship built on mutual respect and genuine affection, the kind that the northern cabaret circuit bred between promoters and the performers they worked with year after year.

It also upgrades Bobby Knutt from "confirmed by poster board" to **confirmed by personal photograph with the manager** — the strongest possible evidence of his presence at Jesters.

Bobby Knutt (1945-2016)

Born Robert Wass in Sheffield on 25 November 1945. He made his name on the South Yorkshire club scene in the 1970s before achieving television fame, including appearances on *The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club* and later as Albert Dingle in *Emmerdale* from 1995. A close circuit contemporary of Stan Richards — both appeared in Ken Loach's *The Price of Coal* (BBC, 1977). The blue velvet suit and ruffled shirt in this photograph are the full Sheffield cabaret peacock — dressed to perform, dressed to dazzle, dressed to make a room full of people forget everything but laughter.

Dave Gill — a third portrait

This photograph gives us our clearest view yet of Dave Gill in his natural habitat — not in a formal studio portrait, not in a group photograph, but backstage at his own club, in his dinner jacket and bow tie, sharing a laugh with one of his performers. It is the most human image of the man behind Jesters. The bow tie, the grin, the evident ease — P. D. Gill, Manager, Punch Bowl Entertainments Limited, Manvers Road, Mexborough, was very much at home.



XIII. Performance Photograph — Mac & Katie Kissoon (believed), at Jesters

A colour performance photograph believed to show **Katie Kissoon** of **Mac & Katie Kissoon** on the Jesters stage. Previously catalogued as "Unknown Artist 3," the photograph has been identified by Dave Gill as believed to be Mac & Katie Kissoon. The identification is consistent with all visible details — the performer, the styling, the backing band, and the Jesters stage backdrop.



Mac & Katie Kissoon (believed) performing at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough, c.1975-1976. The female performer — in a deep red sleeveless dress with dramatically low-cut front, large natural afro — holds a tambourine while singing into a standing microphone. Multiple audience hands are raised in the foreground. Behind her: a drummer, a guitarist in a dark satin jacket with a sunburst electric guitar, and further musicians. The full silver/gold glittering tinsel stage backdrop fills the entire back wall. If you can confirm or correct this identification, please contact the Mexborough and District Heritage Society.

The identification

The photograph was previously catalogued as Unknown Artist 3. Dave Gill believes this to be **Katie Kissoon** of Mac & Katie Kissoon — the Trinidadian-born brother-and-sister duo who had UK hits with "Sugar Candy Kisses" (No.3, 1975) and "Don't Do It Baby" (No.9, 1975). The identification is consistent with Katie Kissoon's known appearance, performance style, and the timing of the duo's peak UK chart success when a Jesters booking would have been arranged.

Katie Kissoon — born Katherine Farthing in Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1951 — is seen here at the height of her powers as a live performer, commanding the room entirely. Her subsequent career as one of the world's most sought-after backing singers (Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, Roger Waters, Elton John, George Harrison) is entirely consistent with the vocal and stage presence visible in this photograph.

The stage backdrop — confirmed in full

This photograph gives the clearest and most complete view of the Jesters silver glittering tinsel stage backdrop — filling the entire back wall. It also shows the full width of the performance area, the congas/bongos on stage, and the packed audience reaching up their hands. It is among the most vivid performance images in the entire Jesters archive.



XIV. Performance Photograph — Frank Ifield (believed), at Jesters

A colour performance photograph believed to show **Frank Ifield** on the Jesters stage — previously catalogued as "Unknown Artist." The identification is consistent with Frank Ifield's known appearance, his signature Gibson J-200 jumbo acoustic guitar, and his confirmed booking at Jesters on **Monday 1 March 1976** as advertised in the *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times*.



Frank Ifield (believed) performing at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough, believed 1 March 1976. Fair/blond hair; dark blue suit; white ruffled dress shirt; black bow tie. Playing a large sunburst acoustic guitar — a Gibson J-200 or similar prestige jumbo instrument, consistent with Ifield's known stage equipment. Right arm raised above his head; head back, singing. Premier drum kit partially visible. A blonde female audience member foreground left, applauding. The silver glittering Jesters stage backdrop visible behind.

Frank Ifield (born 1937)

Born in Coventry, raised in Australia, Frank Ifield became one of the biggest pop stars of the early 1960s — the first artist to have three consecutive UK No.1 singles: "I Remember You" (1962), "Lovesick Blues" (1962), and "The Wayward Wind" (1963). His yodelling style and warm stage presence made him a natural for the cabaret circuit in the 1970s. He is confirmed at Jesters on **Monday 1 March 1976** by the *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times* advertisement of c. late January 1976.

The Gibson J-200-style sunburst jumbo acoustic guitar visible in the photograph is entirely consistent with his known stage equipment. The exuberant raised arm, the ruffled shirt, the blue suit, and the open-mouthed singing are entirely consistent with his known performance style and the staging of a major cabaret act on the Jesters stage. If you can confirm or correct this identification, please contact the Mexborough and District Heritage Society.



XV. Performance Photograph — Al Showman (believed), Winner

of the Talent Show

A colour performance photograph believed to show **Al Showman** on the Jesters stage — previously catalogued as "Unknown Artist 2." Al Showman was the comedian who competed in the International Clubland Talent Show Grand Final on 29 September 1974, recorded for Yorkshire Television. Dave Gill believes Al Showman won the Grand Final — and that this photograph shows him performing at Jesters after his win, returning as a booked act as part of the prize package.



Al Showman (believed) performing at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough, c.1974–1977. Tan/camel suit with distinctive dark brown velvet collar and pocket trim; brown bow tie; white shirt. Grey-brown swept-back hair. Holding a dark hat in his left hand; right arm extended in an expansive gesture. A natural-finish acoustic guitar rests on a stand to his right. The deep crimson Jesters stage curtaining with its gold swag is clearly visible behind him. Believed to be Al Showman — comedian Grand Finalist in the International Clubland Talent Show, 29 September 1974, and believed winner of the £5,000 first prize.

Al Showman — comedian, Grand Finalist, believed winner

Al Showman is confirmed in the International Clubland Talent Show souvenir brochure as one of the seven Grand Finalists on 29 September 1974, listed as "Comedian." He competed alongside Touch of Class (Dance Troupe), The D-Uvals (Magicians), Sam Homer (Vocalist), Diamond Boys (Musical Comedy), Christy "G" (Vocalist), and Fresh Ground (Group/Trio), before a judging panel that included Norman Collier, the editors of *Club Mirror*, *The Stage* and the *Daily Mirror*, and the music editor of *The Sun*. Norman Vaughan compered. R. W. Chadborn, Chairman of Mansfield Brewery, presented the prizes.

Dave Gill believes Al Showman won the first prize of **£5,000** — a life-changing sum in 1974 — plus recording and cabaret contracts worth a further £2,000. The cabaret contracts almost certainly included return bookings at Punch Bowl Entertainments venues, which would explain why this photograph of Al Showman performing at Jesters is in Dave Gill's personal archive. He came back. He won on this stage, and he returned to it.

The distinctive costume

The tan/camel suit with dark brown velvet trim at the collar, lapels and pockets is an immediately recognisable and memorable stage outfit — exactly what a comedian-singer building his brand on the northern club circuit after a Yorkshire Television Grand Final win would wear. The dark hat held in his left hand may be a prop used in a comedy routine. The natural-finish acoustic guitar set aside to his right confirms he combines music with comedy in his act — consistent with "Comedian" as his listed category in the brochure.

The Jesters stage curtaining

The deep crimson velvet stage curtaining with its gold ornamental swag — the same curtaining seen in the Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee photograph — is clearly visible behind him. This is unambiguously the Jesters stage. The man who won the Yorkshire Television Grand Final at Jesters, if Dave Gill's recollection is correct, is here photographed back on the stage where it happened.



XVII. Primary Sources: Dave Gill — The Man Behind Jesters

Seven photographs of Dave Gill are now in hand — together they trace his life from before Jesters to the enduring friendships it created. The Top Rank Doncaster group photograph (c.1969–71) shows him at the start of his entertainment career. The formal studio portrait (c.1974) shows him at the threshold of his time at Jesters. The photograph with Sheila Gill in the Disco bar shows him at home in his club. The photograph with Sheila under the professional wrestling poster shows them together inside Jesters, the venue's varied entertainment life visible in the background. The backstage photograph with Bobby Knutt shows him with one of his performers. The group security staff photograph (c. late 1976 or early 1977) shows him near the end. And the photograph with George Naufahu shows that the bonds formed across the Punch Bowl network lasted long after both venues had closed.

A fourth photograph — Dave Gill with his wife **Sheila Gill**, taken in the Disco bar at Jesters — introduces the person Dave Gill himself describes as "my superstar." Sheila Gill's role in the Jesters story is not formally documented in any of the surviving business records, but no enterprise of this scale and warmth runs without the person behind the person. She is named here, photographed here,

and placed within the history where she belongs.



*Dave Gill (top left, dark hair and tie) with Colin Carruthers (top right), Manager of the Top Rank Suite, Doncaster, and four staff members: Sheila (Secretary, front left); Winnie (Bar Supervisor, front centre-left); Pat (Cook, front centre-right with hat); Olive (Bar 2 Supervisor, front right with glasses). Photographed in **Llanfairfechan, North Wales**, c.1969-71, while attending the wedding of **Stephen Brown**, catering manager. This photograph establishes Dave Gill's professional career before *Jesters* — working in entertainment management at one of South Yorkshire's most significant venues.*

Dave Gill at Top Rank Doncaster — before *Jesters*

This group photograph — taken in **Llanfairfechan, North Wales**, c.1969-71, while the Top Rank team attended the wedding of **Stephen Brown**, the venue's catering manager — shows Dave Gill as a young entertainment professional working at the **Top Rank Suite, Silver Street, Doncaster** under manager **Colin Carruthers**. The Top Rank Suite was part of the Rank Organisation's national chain of ballrooms and entertainment venues, operating in Doncaster from 1964 to 1974.

Dave Gill's time at Top Rank Doncaster was a formative immersion in one of the most exciting live entertainment venues in South Yorkshire. The roster of acts he witnessed and worked with was extraordinary: **David Bowie** during his iconic Ziggy Stardust period (1 September 1972 — just weeks before *Jesters* opened); **The Kinks**; **Pink Floyd**; **Yes**; **Free**; **Rod Stewart**; **Mott the Hoople**; **Edwin Starr**; **Jimmy Ruffin**; **Marv Johnson**; **Judas Priest**; and **Slade**. Throughout this period, the resident band was the popular **Dave Howard Sound**, who provided the musical backbone to the venue's regular programme.

Two further names belong in the Top Rank record — names that history has since judged very differently from how they were received at the time. **Jimmy Savile** and **Gary Glitter** both appeared at the Top Rank, Doncaster. Both were household names at the height of their fame. Both were later convicted of serious sexual offences. Their inclusion here is a matter of historical record, not celebration. Dave Gill met both men when they appeared at the venue. His recollection is precise and telling:

"I met Jimmy Savile and Gary Glitter when they appeared at the Top Rank. Savile came across as unsettling, and looking back, it's remarkable how long he managed to avoid being exposed. Gary Glitter, by contrast, seemed friendly on first meeting — he even came out from backstage and bought all the security staff a beer."

— DAVE GILL, TOP RANK SUITE, DONCASTER, C.1969-1972

This is the professional crucible in which Dave Gill's entertainment career was formed. He did not arrive at Jesters as an enthusiastic amateur given a management role by a brewery — he arrived as someone who had worked alongside Colin Carruthers at one of the most significant live venues in South Yorkshire, seen some of the greatest acts of the era pass through its doors, and understood from direct experience what made a great entertainment night. When Punch Bowl Entertainments and Mansfield Brewery chose P. D. Gill as the promotion boss for Jesters, they were backing someone who was already a proven entertainment professional.

The Top Rank closed in 1974, two years into Jesters' life. The baton of South Yorkshire entertainment excellence passed, in part, to Manvers Road, Mexborough — in the hands of the young man who had learned the trade at Silver Street, Doncaster.

Top Rank Suite, Doncaster — Acts witnessed by Dave Gill, c.1969-1972

- ♦ **David Bowie** (Ziggy Stardust era, 1 September 1972 — weeks before Jesters opened)
- ♦ **The Kinks**
- ♦ **Pink Floyd**
- ♦ **Rod Stewart**
- ♦ **Yes**
- ♦ **Free**
- ♦ **Mott the Hoople**
- ♦ **Edwin Starr**
- ♦ **Jimmy Ruffin**
- ♦ **Marv Johnson**
- ♦ **Judas Priest**
- ♦ **Slade**
- ♦ **Jimmy Savile** and **Gary Glitter** — included as a matter of historical record; both were later convicted of serious sexual offences
- ♦ **Resident band: Dave Howard Sound** — the popular house band throughout Dave Gill's time at Top Rank
- ♦ Manager: **Colin Carruthers**; Staff: Sheila (Secretary), Winnie (Bar Supervisor), Pat (Cook), Olive (Bar 2 Supervisor)



*Dave Gill and Sheila Gill ("my superstar") in the **Disco bar** at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. The Friday night disco was held in the main club cabaret room — the same room where The Drifters, Ken Dodd, and the full headline roster performed. The décor is clearly visible: bold flock wallpaper in pink and magenta on the right wall; dark purple illuminated decorative panels on the left; bar equipment visible bottom left. The Disco bar's vivid 1970s interior contrasts with the theatrical crimson and gold of the performance stage seen in the other photographs.*



Sheila Gill at Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. Strawberry-blonde hair worn up, dark top with white bow tie, bracelet on her wrist — standing beside the stage curtaining of Jesters, entirely at home. Dave Gill's "superstar." The woman behind the club.

Sheila Gill

A second portrait of Sheila Gill — this one taken beside the Jesters stage curtaining, the deep crimson drapes visible behind her left shoulder — shows her not in the bar but at the heart of the

performance space, as natural there as any of the acts who performed on the other side of those curtains. Strawberry-blond hair worn up in the style of the era, dark top with a white bow at the neck, a bracelet catching the light — she is turned to camera with a smile of complete ease.

The Jesters story, as told through its documents and photographs, has been primarily a story of acts and bookings, of corporate structures and booking agents, of television recordings and Christmas show programmes. But Dave Gill has one more thing to say about Jesters — and it is the most important thing of all.

He met Sheila there.

They have been married for over fifty years. Throughout every single one of them, they have worked as a team. The photograph of them together in the Disco bar — Dave in his dinner jacket, Sheila smiling — is not simply an interior view of a nightclub. It is a record of where a life together began. The photograph under the wrestling poster — the two of them laughing in front of Hells Angels and Miss Mitzi Mueller — is not simply a document of Jesters' entertainment programme. It is two people at home in the place they found each other.

Dave Gill called her "my superstar." He has been calling her that, in one way or another, for more than fifty years. Jesters gave him that.

"I met my lovely wife, Sheila, at Jesters. We have been married for over 50 years now, and throughout every single one of them, she has supported me tirelessly."

— DAVE GILL

A third photograph of Dave and Sheila together — a black and white snapshot taken inside **Jesters** — shows them standing in front of a professional wrestling promotion poster on the wall. Dave is in his dinner jacket and bow tie; Sheila in a floral blouse. The poster behind them is clearly legible: *Hells Angels v The Black Diamonds* (winner takes all), *Miss Mitzi Mueller, Girls! Girls! Girls!*. Classic British professional wrestling billing of the era — confirming that Jesters hosted or promoted professional wrestling nights alongside its cabaret and disco programme. The "Astor" name visible on the poster refers to another venue advertised, not the location of this photograph. This is Jesters — and it is Dave and Sheila Gill at home in their club.



David and Sheila Gill standing under a professional wrestling promotion poster inside **Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough**. Dave in dinner jacket and bow tie; Sheila in floral blouse. The poster reads: "Hells Angels · The Black Diamonds · Winner of Above · Winner of Above · Girls! Girls! Girls! · Miss Mitzi Mueller · [Girls] Galore." The "Astor" name on the poster refers to another venue advertised — this photograph was taken inside Jesters. Confirms that professional wrestling featured in the club's entertainment programme alongside cabaret and disco.



Dave Gill (right, silver hair, colourful tie) with **George "Tongan George" Naufahu** (left, yellow tropical shirt, medal/medallion), doorman of the Aquarius, Chesterfield — the sister Punch Bowl Entertainments venue to Jesters. Photographed at a social occasion, years after both venues had closed. George Naufahu was a former boxer who worked the doors of the Aquarius and other Chesterfield venues for many years; he was remembered as "Old School and a true gentleman" following his death aged 88. The photograph is evidence of the lasting bonds formed across the Punch Bowl Entertainments network — the Aquarius doorman and the Jesters manager, still friends long after the lights had gone down on both clubs.

The first is a formal studio portrait — almost certainly taken around the time Dave Gill became

Manager in July 1974. He is dressed in dinner jacket and bow tie, the uniform of the cabaret world he was running. The hair, collar-length and swept back, is entirely of its era. He is grinning broadly — the face of a man with a plan.

The second photograph, taken at the other end of the club's life — c. late 1976 or early 1977 — shows Gill alongside his security team, with promotional poster boards for Tommy Hunt, Bobby Knutt and Diamond Boys visible behind the group.



David Gill — a formal studio portrait, c.1974, taken around the time he became Manager of Jesters in July 1974. The dinner jacket and bow tie are the uniform of the cabaret world he was about to make his own.

David (Dave) Gill

Joined Jesters on 20 November 1973 as Reception Manager; appointed Promotions Manager by Mick Pickard in April 1974; became Manager in July 1974, a role he held until the club's final night on Saturday 2 April 1977. He operated on behalf of **Punch Bowl Entertainments**, the entertainment subsidiary of **Mansfield Brewery**, with evident autonomy and genuine passion for programming. A personal photograph with his wife **Sheila Gill** — taken in the Disco bar at Jesters and captioned by Dave himself as "my superstar" — introduces the woman beside the man, and the human heart of the Jesters story.

His direct quotes in the local press speak for themselves: *"After witnessing the popularity of the two groups in working men's clubs, I thought the double billing would provide a perfect evening's entertainment all round... Already ticket sales are well under way and we expect a capacity audience."* This is not the voice of a reluctant corporate appointee but of someone who genuinely loved what he was doing.

The breadth of the Jesters roster — from Stéphane Grappelli to Frank Carson, from The Drifters to the Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir — reflects a man who understood his community and his audience, and who used the resources of Roy Tipper Entertainments and Mansfield Brewery's backing to give them something extraordinary. What he did after the club closed on Saturday 2 April 1977 is not yet known.



Dave Gill (third from left) with the Jesters security team, c. late 1976 or early 1977. Left to right: Barry (surname unknown), Tommy Fletcher, David Gill, Geoff Sargent, Army Recruitment Office Doncaster (surname unknown), Tommy Joyce MBE, Jeff? (surname unknown). Poster boards confirm upcoming bookings for Tommy Hunt, Bobby Knutt and Diamond Boys.

The security team

Tommy Joyce MBE: The most remarkable individual in the group photograph. A former **Commonwealth Games bronze medallist boxer** (welterweight, Edinburgh 1970), representing Scotland, who fought out of **Doncaster Plant Works Amateur Boxing Club** and later **Hickleton Boxing Club**. He turned professional in 1971, fighting 51 bouts between 1971 and 1980 — and **boxing professionally at Jesters** during his career. After boxing he became a school caretaker in Mexborough and a legendary charity fundraiser, raising over **£200,000** for good causes. He was awarded the **MBE in 2007**. His role at Jesters combined security with sport: the man who kept the peace at the door also fought professionally on the stage.

Outside the club, Tommy and Dave Gill were friends as well as colleagues. Tommy had the bright idea that Dave should join him for a session at **Hickleton Boxing Club**. His reasoning was straightforward: sparring with someone heavier would give him an edge when he stepped into the ring with fighters his own size. They weren't out to hurt each other. But boxing has a way of reminding you that intentions don't matter once a punch lands. Dave never even saw the fist that cracked him square on the jaw. One second he was moving; the next he was frozen in place — still standing, but completely stunned. Tommy flashed a grin and said that if it had been a real bout, he'd be finished. Dave's jaw didn't fully forgive that moment for over twenty years.

Tommy Fletcher: Mine rescue worker at **Rossington Colliery**, Doncaster — one of the major pits of the South Yorkshire coalfield. His role as a colliery mine rescue worker was among the most demanding and dangerous in the mining industry, requiring specialist training and exceptional courage. That he also served as part of the Jesters security team places him at the intersection of two worlds that defined South Yorkshire in the 1970s: the pit and the cabaret club. **Tommy Fletcher, Barry, Jeff (×2):** The other members of the security team whose surnames and full personal histories are sought. Anyone who knew these individuals is encouraged to contact the Mexborough and District Heritage Society.

Acts on the poster boards

Three acts are confirmed on the boards: **Tommy Hunt** (American soul singer, Yorkshire-based, chart hits 1975–76); **Bobby Knutt** (Sheffield comedian); and **Diamond Boys**.

"Tommy had the bright idea that I should join him for a session at Hickleton Boxing Club. He figured sparring with someone heavier would give him an edge when he stepped into the ring with fighters his own size. We weren't out to hurt each other — but boxing has a way of reminding you that intentions don't matter once a punch lands. I never even saw the fist that cracked me square on the jaw. One second I was moving, the next I was frozen in place, still standing but completely stunned. Tommy flashed a grin and said that if it had been a real bout, I'd be finished. My jaw didn't fully forgive that moment for over twenty years."

— DAVE GILL, ON SPARRING WITH TOMMY JOYCE MBE AT HICKLETON BOXING CLUB

Tommy Joyce MBE — a Mexborough legend

- ♦ Born c.1949; based in Mexborough, South Yorkshire.
- ♦ Amateur boxing: represented Scotland at the 1970 Commonwealth Games (Edinburgh), winning welterweight bronze. Covered extensively by the *South Yorkshire Times* and *Mexborough & Swinton Times*.
- ♦ Boxed out of Doncaster Plant Works Amateur Boxing Club and Hickleton Boxing Club.
- ♦ Professional career: 51 bouts, 1971–1980.
- ♦ Post-boxing: school caretaker and charity marathon runner, raising over £200,000 for causes including the Royal British Legion, Weston Park Cancer Charity, and others.
- ♦ Awarded the MBE in 2007 for charitable services.
- ♦ At Jesters: member of the security team — and a professional boxer who fought bouts at the venue during his professional career (1971–1980). His boxing background, local standing and direct connection to the club made him a central figure in Jesters' broader sporting and entertainment programme.
- ♦ **Tommy Fletcher:** Mine rescue worker at Rossington Colliery, Doncaster. The mine rescue service required specialist volunteers trained to enter burning or flooded pits to save trapped miners — one of the most demanding roles in the entire coalfield industry. His presence on the Jesters security team reflects the broader community from which the club's staff were drawn: working men of the South Yorkshire coalfield, for whom an evening at Jesters was a world away from their working lives.

A fifth primary source — Dave Gill's own business card — confirms the complete ownership chain in print and adds the club's telephone number.

JESTERS
MEXBOROUGH
Tel. MEXBOROUGH 3867/8

P. D. GILL
Manager



PUNCH BOWL ENTERTAINMENTS LTD.

The business card of Jesters, Mexborough. Printed in red: "JESTERS MEXBOROUGH / Tel. MEXBOROUGH 3867/8 / P. D. GILL Manager / PUNCH BOWL ENTERTAINMENTS LTD." The Punch Bowl logo (bowl with cockerel) and the Mansfield Brewery double-arch M appear side by side — confirming the full ownership chain on a single document. The only surviving printed artefact of the club's day-to-day commercial identity.



VIII. Soul Nights & the Northern Soul Connection

This sits in interesting tension with other evidence. The soul-source.co.uk forum, home to Northern Soul enthusiasts, lists Jesters among the key Mexborough venues on the soul scene alongside the Mexborough Reform Club, the Brickyard, Swinton Civic, and others — suggesting that whatever Jesters' formal soul-night policy, it remained associated with the soul scene in local memory. The confirmed appearance of Detroit soul legend **J.J. Barnes** on **Monday 21 October 1974** (recorded on setlist.fm) also connects the venue to the Northern Soul circuit — and places him at Jesters in the same month as the Yorkshire Television Grand Final.

The likeliest interpretation is that Jesters attempted a dedicated, regular Sunday soul night — probably in 1974 or early 1975 — found it commercially unviable as a standalone weekly event, and reverted to cabaret; but that soul acts continued to be booked for one-off headline nights (as J.J. Barnes on 21 October 1974 and The Drifters on 4 May 1976 demonstrate). The Friday disco would have played soul records as part of its general programme regardless.

Mexborough's position in the Northern Soul geography is firmly established. The town was considered "the heart of Northern Soul in South Yorkshire" by devotees, and soul music was clearly part of Jesters' identity even if a dedicated soul night proved unsustainable. This makes Jesters a more complex and interesting venue than a simple cabaret club — a place where multiple popular music cultures of the mid-1970s intersected.

"Mexborough Soul. Some would argue that Mexborough is the Heart of Northern Soul in South Yorkshire."

— SOUL-SOURCE.CO.UK FORUM, MEXBOROUGH — WHO REMEMBERS THREAD, 2016

IX. Complete Roster of Known Artists

The complete artists roster — 84 confirmed and attributed acts — is available as a separate spreadsheet: **jesters_artists_roster.xlsx**. The spreadsheet lists every performer with their genre, confirmed date(s), biographical notes, and YouTube links where available. It can be filtered by genre or status and is sorted alphabetically.

Acts at Jesters Club, 1972–1977, ranged across comedy, soul and R&B, jazz, variety, pop and music, choral and charity entertainment. Confirmed acts include:

Confirmed performers — selected highlights

- ♦ **Opening night:** Ken Dodd (13 November 1972)
 - ♦ **Soul & R&B:** The Drifters (twice), Tommy Hunt, J.J. Barnes (21 Oct 1974), Major Lance (16 Mar 1976), Jimmy James & the Vagabonds, The Fantastics, The Foundations, Mac & Katie Kissoon, Wayne Fontana, Brotherhood of Man
 - ♦ **Comedy:** Bob Monkhouse, Les Dawson, Bernard Manning, Frank Carson, Norman Collier, Colin Crompton, Marti Caine, Ken Goodwin, Duggie Brown, Russ Abbot, Little & Large, The Krankies, Bobby Knutt, Jimmy Cricket, Paul Shane, Stan Richards, Charlie Williams, Roy Castle OBE, Cannon & Ball
 - ♦ **Jazz:** Stéphane Grappelli, Acker Bilk & His Paramount Jazz Band, International Youth Jazz Orchestra
 - ♦ **Variety:** Paul Daniels, Ivy Benson & Her All Girl Band, Éric Delaney & His Band, Roger Whittaker, Karl Denver, Malcolm Roberts, P.J. Proby, Frank Ifield (believed 1 Mar 1976), Tony Hatch & Jackie Trent, Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee, Millican & Nesbitt, Huff & Puff, Richard Dunn
 - ♦ **Special events:** The Wombles (Christmas Cracker, 21 Dec 1975), Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir (Sunday evening), Fashion Show by Madame Florence Mexborough
 - ♦ **YTV Grand Final (29 Sept 1974):** Touch of Class, The D-Uvals, Sam Homer, Diamond Boys, Christy "G", Al Showman (believed winner), Fresh Ground — compere Norman Vaughan
 - ♦ **New additions:** The Black Abbots (with Russ Abbot), Jimmy Crawford & His Band, Tufty Gordon, Malcolm Roberts, Karl Denver, P.J. Proby, Roger Whittaker, The Mark Stevens Five featuring Lyndsay Wallis
- For the complete roster with biographical notes, confirmed dates and YouTube links, see the accompanying spreadsheet: **jesters_artists_roster.xlsx**.



X. Year by Year, 1972–1977

MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 1972

Opening Night — Ken Dodd Headlines; Robin Chadburn Opens the Club

Jesters Club opens on **Monday 13 November 1972**. The club is officially opened by **R. W. (Robin) Chadburn, Chairman of Mansfield Brewery**. The opening night headline act is **Ken Dodd** — one of the most beloved entertainers in Britain, and a perfect choice to launch a new South Yorkshire cabaret club. R. W. Chadburn will return to the Jesters stage two years later, on 29 September 1974, to present the prizes at the International Clubland Talent Show Grand Final recorded for Yorkshire Television. A first Christmas show — "Clubland's First Annual Christmas Show" — is presumed in December 1972; the Second Annual in December 1973. No programmes for either have yet been found.

Opening — First Year and a Half

Jesters Club opens on Manvers Road, Mexborough, under Punch Bowl Entertainments Ltd. and Mansfield Brewery. The precise opening date and first act are not established. The club's first year of operation runs under management before Dave Gill's arrival. A first Christmas show — "Clubland's First Annual Christmas Show" — is presumed in December 1972; the Second Annual in December 1973. No programmes for either have yet been found.

20 NOVEMBER 1973

Dave Gill Joins Jesters

Dave Gill joins Jesters on **20 November 1973** in the role of **Reception Manager**. He brings with him professional experience from the Top Rank Suite, Doncaster — where he worked under Colin Carruthers alongside acts including David Bowie, Pink Floyd, Rod Stewart, The Kinks, Slade, Edwin Starr and Jimmy Ruffin. The Second Annual Christmas Show takes place the following month.

APRIL 1974

Dave Gill Appointed Promotions Manager

Mick Pickard, the Punch Bowl Entertainments Area Manager, looks across the reception desk and notices Dave Gill yawning. "Are you tired?" Gill admits he is — he has a part-time job at the **Mecca Bingo Club, Doncaster**. Pickard's response is immediate: "Pack it in; we need a promotions manager here at the club." Fewer hours, similar pay. Dave Gill takes the role. *"The pay was fine... but I definitely don't remember working fewer hours."* He becomes **Promotions Manager** in April 1974.

JULY 1974

Dave Gill Becomes Manager

Dave Gill is appointed Manager of Jesters in July 1974 — stepping up from his role as Promotions Manager (appointed April 1974), having joined as Reception Manager on 20 November 1973. The title is confirmed on the business card ("P. D. Gill, Manager") and in the Punch Bowl Entertainments letter of 7 October 1974. Within weeks of his appointment he oversees the **Yorkshire Television Grand Final** of The International Clubland Talent Show.

29 SEPTEMBER 1974

Yorkshire Television Grand Final — Jesters on National TV

The Grand Final of **The International Clubland Talent Show**, presented by Mansfield Brewery with Punch Bowl Entertainments, is held at Jesters Nite Club — recorded for **Yorkshire Television**. The prize fund is £10,000 (1st prize £5,000; 2nd £2,000; 3rd £1,000; plus recording and cabaret contracts worth £2,000). By invitation only, commencing 6 p.m. Dave Gill, just three months into his role as Manager, oversees one of the most ambitious events in Jesters' history. The winners, judges, presenter and competing acts are not yet

known; the Yorkshire Television archive may hold the answer.

● DECEMBER 1974

Third Annual Christmas Show — Dave Gill's First as Manager

The Third Annual Christmas Show is documented by the surviving programme — Dave Gill's first Christmas show as full Manager. A bill of at least seventeen named acts, headlined by Paul Shane and Stan Richards. Produced by JAVA Management's Jean Allen; compered by Molly Richards; acknowledged with thanks to Dave Gill and "in appreciation" of Peter Bellamy.

● EARLY-MID 1975

Soul Nights Tried — and Discontinued

Sunday soul nights at Jesters are introduced at some point — likely late 1974 or early 1975 — and are subsequently discontinued due to insufficient support. A local press cutting announces the change, noting that Friday disco nights will continue. The soul night experiment reflects Mexborough's genuine Northern Soul credentials, but evidently the dedicated Sunday format could not sustain itself commercially.

● 7 AUGUST C.1975

Dual Bill: Bitter Suite & Drifting Harmony

Dave Gill books Bitter Suite (Tamla Motown/soul covers specialists, featuring future "St Elmo's Fire" hitmaker John Parr) and Drifting Harmony for a sold-out dual-bill night. A local press item publicises the event and quotes Gill directly. Ticket enquiries are being received from "areas well outside the area" — confirming Jesters' regional reach. This is the first event at Jesters for which a specific date (August 7th) is confirmed in a contemporary source.

● 1975-1976

Peak Years — and a Pre-Eurovision Booking

Jesters continues to attract top-tier bookings. Cannon and Ball, Ken Dodd, Bob Monkhouse, Frank Ifield and J.J. Barnes are all either confirmed or probable during this period. Sheffield's Fiesta has closed by this point — Jesters is now one of the leading cabaret destinations in South Yorkshire by default as well as by quality.

In approximately **January 1976**, Brotherhood of Man perform at Jesters — some three months before winning the Eurovision Song Contest on 3 April 1976 with "Save Your Kisses for Me." The Mexborough audience sees them while they are still a promising club-circuit pop group. After the appearance, their management offers Dave Gill a return booking at a **15% fee increase**. He declines — at that moment, the group have not yet been selected to represent the UK at Eurovision and the increase seems unjustified. The week the proposed return date would have taken place, Brotherhood of Man are at **No.1 in the UK charts** and have won the Eurovision Song Contest. It is one of the great what-ifs of Jesters' story.

● 4 MAY 1976 (AND A SECOND CONFIRMED APPEARANCE)

The Drifters — Twice at Jesters

The Drifters — "Under the Boardwalk," "Up on the Roof," "Saturday Night at the Movies" — performed at Jesters on **two separate confirmed occasions**. The first is dated precisely: **4 May 1976**, on stage at 9 p.m., confirmed by the *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times* advertisement of 28 February 1976. The second appearance is confirmed by broadcastbarnsley.wordpress.com. A surviving colour performance photograph captures one of their Jesters appearances — a performer in a red/orange suit leaning from the stage towards a crowd of outstretched arms. Two Drifters bookings at a single South Yorkshire nightclub is a measure of what Dave Gill and Roy Tipper Entertainments could achieve.

DECEMBER 1976

Fifth and Final Christmas Show

A Fifth Annual Christmas Show is presumed to have taken place in December 1976 — no programme yet found. This would be the last Christmas show before the club's closure the following spring.

WEDNESDAY 12 JANUARY 1977

Charity Boxing Tournament — Richard Dunn Special Guest

A **Charity Boxing Tournament and Cabaret Night** at Jesters features a special guest appearance by **Richard Dunn** — the Bradford heavyweight who had fought **Muhammad Ali** for the World Heavyweight Championship in Munich just eight months earlier, on 25 May 1976. Amateur bouts arranged by the **Cross Daggers Boxing Club**. Tickets £2 including entrance. Advertised in the *South Yorkshire Times* and *Mexborough & Swinton Times*, Christmas Day 1976. One of the last major confirmed events before Jesters closed on Saturday 2 April 1977.

SATURDAY 2 APRIL 1977

Final Night — Jesters Closes

Jesters Club holds its final night on **Saturday 2 April 1977** — Easter Saturday — closing after four years and five months. The closure is the direct consequence of a licensing dispute: noise complaints from neighbouring residents led South Yorkshire Police to demand 100% table service after 10.30 p.m. under the Special Hours Certificate — a requirement that was unworkable at the scale Jesters was operating. At the point of closure the club was trading profitably. The final act on the stage is not yet known.

XI. Archive Footage — Artists from the Jesters Years

No footage of Jesters itself is known to survive in the public domain. The following YouTube links show confirmed Jesters artists performing in the era of their appearances at the club — the closest available window onto what an evening there would have felt like.

- ♦ **Cannon & Ball** — Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club, 1974: youtube.com/watch?v=lvpyDOXqfqA
- ♦ **Ken Dodd** — Live cabaret, 1970s: youtube.com/watch?v=v2E6V2KJ0c8
- ♦ **Paul Shane** — *Hi-de-Hi!* as Ted Bovis: youtube.com/watch?v=rvY3m4Ddo_I
- ♦ **The Drifters** — 1970s television: youtube.com/watch?v=8i_mJ3K2VbQ
- ♦ **J.J. Barnes** — Northern Soul: youtube.com/watch?v=WRYfCGaDU6w
- ♦ **Frank Ifield** — *I Remember You*: youtube.com/watch?v=JiinPNuL4dQ

If any link is unavailable, searching YouTube for the artist name plus "1970s" or "Wheeltappers" will find comparable period footage. No footage of Jesters itself is known to exist in the public domain — if you have any, please contact the Mexborough and District Heritage Society.



XIX-A. The Night the Ice Broke — The Full Monty at Jesters

Not every night at Jesters was cabaret, jazz or boxing. One night stands completely alone in the memory of Dave Gill — a night that began with Mick Pickard's pitch, sold out on word of mouth alone, and ended with a call from *The Sun* newspaper and the longest two hours of Dave Gill's professional life.

"I remember it well. In fact, I don't think I've ever been so scared in my life. The math alone was enough to make anyone's heart race: around 700 women and just eight men."

— DAVE GILL

The Risky Proposal

The whole thing came about when Mick Pickard came to the club to pitch an idea. He'd been talking to Roy Tipper of Roy Tipper Entertainments, who had just run a massive show at the Sands Nightclub in Skegness — a high-energy hen night package: a drag queen, a comedian compere, and three male strippers. Mick wanted to bring the show to Jesters on a midweek night.

Dave Gill knew they were playing with fire. They could probably have got the plan past Jack Williamson — but **Tony Scruby** was a completely different ball game. The Mansfield Brewery Managing Director was incredibly straight-laced; if he'd found out they were hosting a show like that, he would have sacked them on the spot. But in the end, they decided to throw caution to the wind. They advertised locally — and the show sold out instantly.

Chaos on Stage

The night was going brilliantly. The room was packed, the atmosphere was electric, and everyone was having a wonderful time. That is, until the final stripper appeared.

Just to the left of the stage sat a party of about eighteen women — a hen night for a woman who happened to be a police inspector. By this point in the evening, the group was well and truly under the influence. As the performer reached the climax of his act and shed his last piece of clothing, the bride-to-be suddenly bolted toward the stage. She grabbed a champagne bucket filled with freezing water and ice and launched the whole thing directly at him.

The place went into total uproar. Soaked and startled, the performer slipped on the ice and landed squarely on his backside. Dave Gill looked over at the Jesters security team — Tommy Joyce MBE and the rest, men who had faced everything the South Yorkshire cabaret circuit could throw at them — and for the first time in his career, he saw it in every single one of their faces: they wished they were somewhere else.

The Morning After

The panic didn't end when the lights went down. The next day, *The Sun* newspaper called Dave Gill asking for a quote about the incident. He explained exactly what had happened — and then levelled

with the reporter: if they printed the name of the club, he would almost certainly lose his job.

To their credit, they were very kind. When the story came out, the article referred to the venue simply as **"A Club in South Yorkshire."** Dave Gill stayed up to get his hands on the morning edition — finishing work at 3 a.m., papers arriving at the newsagents around 5 a.m., two hours that were the longest of his professional life. When he finally saw that they'd kept the club's name out of it, the relief was overwhelming. He had dodged the Scruby bullet.

"I have always, since that date, held a soft spot for that reporter," Dave Gill recalls. "Despite their reputation, I will always have fond memories of *The Sun* for saving my skin that day."

"Just to the left of the stage sat a party of about eighteen women — a hen night for a woman who happened to be a police inspector. As the performer reached the climax of his act, the bride-to-be bolted toward the stage, grabbed a champagne bucket filled with freezing water and ice, and launched the whole thing right at him. Soaked and startled, he slipped on the ice and landed squarely on his backside. For the first time in my career, I looked over at the Jesters security team and saw that every single one of them wished they were somewhere else."

— DAVE GILL

"The next day, The Sun called asking for a quote. I told them exactly what had happened — but I also levelled with them: if they printed the name of the club, I would almost certainly lose my job. When the story came out, the article simply said 'A Club in South Yorkshire.' Those two hours between finishing work at 3 a.m. and the papers arriving at 5 a.m. were the longest of my life. I will always have fond memories of The Sun for saving my skin that day."

— DAVE GILL

What this night confirms

- ♦ The package — drag queen, comedian compere, three male strippers — was conceived by **Mick Pickard** and sourced through **Roy Tipper Entertainments**, who had already run the same show successfully at **The Sands Nightclub, Skegness**
- ♦ The event sold out on local word-of-mouth alone — **around 700 women** attended
- ♦ The show was deliberately kept from **A. J. Scruby T.D.**, Mansfield Brewery Managing Director — named on the Punch Bowl Entertainments letterhead — who would have dismissed the entire management on the spot had he known
- ♦ Jack Williamson, by contrast, might have been persuaded — a revealing insight into the different characters of the two senior figures
- ♦ The guest of honour at the fateful hen party was a serving **woman Police Inspector** — a remarkable detail given that the South Yorkshire Police thank-you letter to Dave Gill for assisting officers during a different incident in 1975 is already in the archive
- ♦ *The Sun* newspaper reported the incident the following day — but protected the club's identity, referring to it only as "**A Club in South Yorkshire**"
- ♦ Tony Scruby never found out. The P45s were never issued.



XIX-B. The Spaniard Cometh — Alfonso at Jesters

Jesters had a really good head waiter. So good, in fact, that it was decided to transfer him to **The Pike & Herron** at Sheffield — a Punch Bowl Entertainments pub right in the middle of the Sheffield and Rotherham steel industry, by Tinsley Viaduct. The pub was booming: all the executives from the steel works would entertain over lunch or dinner there. The transfer made perfect sense.

Dave Gill was told not to worry about the vacancy. Jack Williamson had the solution. On a recent trip to **Benidorm**, Jack had met a wonderful Spaniard called **Alfonso** — named, Jack explained with evident satisfaction, after **Alfonso XIII of Spain**. Alfonso was going to be Jesters' new head waiter.

When Alfonso arrived, Jack had forgotten to mention one detail.

Alfonso didn't speak English.

Fortunately, one of the barmaids took a shine to Alfonso — and volunteered to teach him. ☺

"We had a really good head waiter at Jesters, and it was decided to transfer him to The Pike & Herron at Sheffield, right in the middle of the Sheffield/Rotherham steel industry by Tinsley Viaduct. I was told not to worry — Jack had met this wonderful Spaniard in Benidorm called Alfonso, who was named after a king (Alfonso XIII of Spain), and he would be our head waiter's replacement. When he arrived, Jack had forgotten to mention that he didn't speak English. Fortunately, one of the barmaids took a shine to Alfonso, and she volunteered to teach him. ☺"

— DAVE GILL

What this story reveals

- ♦ Jesters had a **Restaurant** as one of its four named areas — confirmed by the South Yorkshire Times advertisements — with professional waiting staff including a dedicated head waiter
- ♦ The **Pike & Herron, Sheffield** — by Tinsley Viaduct, in the heart of the Sheffield/Rotherham steel industry — was another Punch Bowl Entertainments venue, booming with steel industry executive entertaining at lunch and dinner
- ♦ **Jack Williamson** — Dunkirk veteran, Military Cross holder, director of Punch Bowl Entertainments, negotiator with Hughie Green — also went on holiday to Benidorm and recruited waiting staff. The full range of the man
- ♦ **Alfonso**, named after Alfonso XIII of Spain, arrived at Jesters ready to serve. He did not speak English. One of the barmaids took a shine to him and volunteered to teach him. Some lessons, it seems, are more enjoyable than others



XIX-C. Inspector Clouseau at the Jesters — The Case of the Missing Christmas Tree

The night had that sharp December bite — the kind that makes your breath hang in the air like smoke — and inside the club the staff were busy trimming tinsel, testing fairy lights, and arguing about whether the star should go on straight or at a jaunty angle. Everything felt festive... until the chef burst into reception looking pale enough to pass for a snowman.

"The Christmas tree's gone," he said.

Not a bauble. Not a length of tinsel. The tree. The **15-foot centrepiece** of the whole club.

They marched to the outside compound behind the kitchen, expecting to find it leaning somewhere it shouldn't be. Instead, they found nothing but a lonely patch of concrete and a trail of pine needles

glinting under the security lights like clues in a crime scene.

So they grabbed a torch and followed the trail.

Across the car park they went, the cold wind slicing through their coats. The needles continued over the road, then down the next street, as if the tree had tried to make a run for it. Every few steps, another little green breadcrumb. It felt absurd — and yet, there they were, creeping through the night like bargain-bin detectives on a festive stakeout.

Then the trail turned sharply down a garden path.

And there it ended.

In the front window of the house stood the missing tree — or what was left of it — blazing away in full festive glory, lights flashing like it was auditioning for the Blackpool Illuminations. It looked so smug, standing there as if it had always belonged.

The police were called. They arrived, were shown the pine needle trail leading straight to the door like a neon arrow, and asked Dave Gill what he wanted to do. He just wanted the tree returned to the club where it belonged.

But then came the final twist.

To make it fit in the thief's living room, they had sawn **three feet off the top**. The majestic 15-footer had been reduced to a festive amputee.

"The chef burst into reception looking pale enough to pass for a snowman. 'The Christmas tree's gone,' he said — the tree. The 15-foot centrepiece of the whole club. We grabbed a torch and followed the trail of pine needles — across the car park, over the road, down the next street. Then it turned sharply down a garden path. And there it ended. In the front window of the house stood our missing tree — blazing away in full glory, lights flashing like it was auditioning for Blackpool Illuminations. To make it fit in the thief's living room, they'd sawn three feet off the top. Our majestic 15-footer had been reduced to a festive amputee."

— DAVE GILL



XIX-D. Jack Williamson's Management Bonding Day Out — Sea Fishing in Whitby

Jack Williamson decided it would be a brilliant idea for a management bonding day if they all went sea fishing off Whitby — home, in his opinion, to the best fish and chips in the world. So off they went: about fourteen of them. The more sensible managers in the company quietly opted out, which in hindsight was a wise move.

On the way over, one of the managers had brought sausage rolls, vol-au-vents and various nibbles, which were passed around the bus like they were heading to a picnic rather than the North Sea.

They arrived in Whitby, boarded the boat, and headed about six miles out. Jack then announced a competition: everyone would put £2 into a prize pot, and whoever caught the most fish would win the lot. Easy money, thought Dave Gill.

The sea, however, had other plans. There was a decent swell rolling under them, and the two Tongan lads from Aquarius security — **George** and **Freddie** — started turning a shade of pale that nobody had previously witnessed. Dave Gill wasn't feeling too clever himself. Eventually, the sausage rolls made a dramatic reappearance over the side of the boat. After about half an hour, he felt perfectly fine again — the only time in his life he had ever been seasick.

He picked up a rod, had a go, and to his surprise caught the first — and only — fish of the entire day. It was about six inches long, hardly worth bragging about, and certainly not worth taking home. After showing everyone his mighty catch, he slipped it back into the sea.

The boat returned to harbour early. The sea conditions had become, as Dave Gill puts it, "*a tad choppy — to say the least.*"

On the way back to port, he was quietly chuffed. He had just won himself £20 for catching a fish the size of a pencil case.

After dinner, Jack stood up for the presentation. He announced it was a shame only one fish had been caught — but the good news was that everyone would be getting their money back.

Then came the punchline.

Dave Gill had been disqualified.

For **ground baiting**.

Apparently, his earlier contribution of sausage rolls to the North Sea ecosystem counted as cheating.

"Jack announced a competition — £2 each into a pot, whoever caught the most fish wins the lot. Easy money, I thought. The sea had other plans. The sausage rolls made a dramatic reappearance over the side of the boat. After about half an hour I felt perfectly fine — the only time in my life I've ever been seasick. I caught the first — and only — fish of the entire day. Six inches long. I slipped it back. The boat returned to harbour early — the sea conditions had become a tad choppy, to say the least. On the way back to port I was quietly chuffed. I'd just won myself £20 for catching a fish the size of a pencil case. After dinner, Jack stood up. He announced it was a shame only one fish had been caught — but the good news was that everyone would be getting their money back. I had been disqualified. For ground baiting. Apparently, my earlier contribution of sausage rolls to the North Sea ecosystem counted as cheating."

— DAVE GILL, ON JACK WILLIAMSON'S MANAGEMENT BONDING DAY, WHITBY



XI-A. The Price of Success — Why Jesters Closed

The story of why Jesters closed is one that Dave Gill has never told publicly until now. It was not a failure of ambition, programming, or audience. It was the opposite. It was success — and the licence conditions that success brought into conflict.

After making a modest loss in its first two years, the business was successfully turned around by the third year. By year four — 1975–76 — Jesters was trading strongly in profit, with previous years' hard work paying off and future bookings looking exceptionally promising. The very scale of its success, however, brought an unexpected and ultimately fatal challenge.

The main entrance to Jesters ran parallel to Manvers Road, just thirty yards from a row of residential houses. As the club grew more popular, so did the number of noise complaints to the council and the police — particularly around the 2 a.m. closing time. The police eventually visited to ensure Jesters was adhering to its **Special Hours Certificate**, which permitted the serving of alcohol from 10.30 p.m. until 2 a.m. To maintain this certificate, the club was required to offer an extensive food menu and full table service for alcohol.

The police informed Dave Gill that Jesters was in breach of its licence. Their interpretation was uncompromising: **full waiter and waitress service for every single customer after 10.30 p.m.** Dave Gill was familiar with this requirement from his earlier career at the Top Rank Suite, Doncaster, where the standard practice across the country was to rope off an area in front of the bar, allowing waiting staff to act as intermediaries between customers and bar staff. The police refused to accept this method. They threatened to apply to the courts to revoke the Special Hours Certificate unless Jesters implemented 100% table service throughout.

Given the suddenness of the demand and the scale of the operation, implementing complete table

service was simply not viable without a massive increase in staff numbers. The following month was chaotic. Unable to provide the level of service demanded by the authorities, Jesters began to lose the very customers who had made the club a success. By Easter 1977, the position was untenable. The final night was **Saturday 2 April 1977**.

The final bitter irony: the licensing law that made Jesters' position untenable was changed shortly afterwards. The interpretation of the Special Hours Certificate that South Yorkshire Police had applied so rigidly — the demand for 100% table service for every customer after 10.30 p.m. — was superseded. The standard industry practice that Dave Gill had operated, and that venues across the country had always used, was subsequently accepted. But the damage had already been done. Jesters was gone.

"After making a modest loss in its first two years, we successfully turned the business around by the third. By year four, we were trading strongly in the black, and with the previous years' hard work finally paying off, the future bookings looked exceptionally promising. However, the club's success brought an unexpected challenge: noise. Our main entrance ran parallel to Manvers Road, just thirty yards from a row of residential houses. As the club grew more popular, so did the number of noise complaints."

— DAVE GILL, MANAGER OF JESTERS CLUB, JULY 1974 - SATURDAY 2 APRIL 1977

"The law was changed shortly after — but unfortunately the damage had already been done."

— DAVE GILL

"People fell in love with the Jesters — and I fell in love with my wife."

— DAVE GILL, MANAGER OF JESTERS CLUB, JULY 1974 - SATURDAY 2 APRIL 1977

The Special Hours Certificate — and its consequences

- ♦ The **Special Hours Certificate** permitted Jesters to serve alcohol from **10.30 p.m. to 2.00 a.m.** — essential for a cabaret club operating late-night shows
- ♦ The certificate required an extensive food menu and full table service for alcohol throughout the late-night period
- ♦ Standard industry practice was to rope off an area in front of the bar and use waiting staff as intermediaries — accepted at venues across the country, including the Top Rank Suite, Doncaster
- ♦ South Yorkshire Police refused to accept this method and demanded **100% table service for every customer after 10.30 p.m.**
- ♦ The police threatened to apply to the courts to revoke the Special Hours Certificate unless the condition was met
- ♦ Implementing complete table service without a massive increase in staff was not viable at the scale Jesters was operating
- ♦ The following month was chaotic; the club began losing the customers who had made it a success
- ♦ Jesters closed on **Saturday 2 April 1977** — Easter Saturday — four years and five months after opening
- ♦ The licensing law was **changed shortly afterwards** — but the damage had already been done. Jesters was gone
- ♦ The final night was not the result of declining popularity or poor management. It was the direct consequence of Jesters' own success creating noise complaints that led to an unworkable licensing requirement — subsequently superseded



XII. Final Night — Saturday 2 April 1977

Jesters Club held its final night on **Saturday 2 April 1977** — Easter Saturday — closing after four years and five months of operation. The reasons for the closure are documented in the preceding section: a licensing dispute over the Special Hours Certificate, triggered by noise complaints from neighbouring residents on Manvers Road, that made continued operation unworkable. At the point of closure, Jesters was trading profitably with a strong forward booking programme. It closed not because it had failed, but because its success had made it impossible to continue on the terms the authorities demanded.

The final act on the stage on Saturday 2 April 1977 is not yet known. For the people of Mexborough and the wider Dearne Valley, the closure marked the end of something real — a place where, for four and a half years, a South Yorkshire coalfield town could claim to be at the centre of Britain's entertainment world.

"Why go to Leeds or Sheffield when you only had to go to Mexborough in your search for a good time?"

— BROADCASTBARNESLEY.WORDPRESS.COM, ON SOUTH YORKSHIRE NIGHTLIFE IN THE 1970S

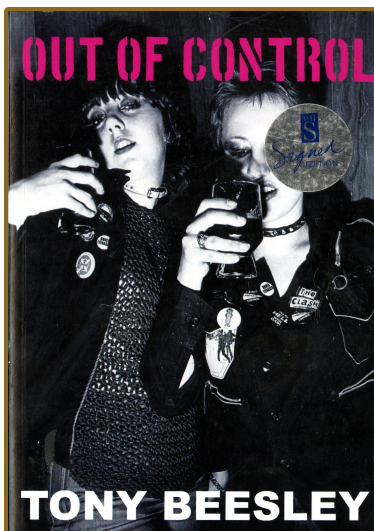


XXII. After Jesters: The Windmill Club, Rotherham, 1977-1978

Jesters closed on Saturday 2 April 1977. Dave Gill did not step back from entertainment management. Within months he had taken on the management of the **Windmill Club at Millmoor** — the entertainment venue at **Rotherham United Football Club's** Millmoor ground, which the club had used as its home since 1925. The club took its name from the windmill central to Rotherham United's club emblem — "The Millers" being their longstanding nickname.

The Windmill Club was, by 1977, struggling. The cultural landscape that had sustained the cabaret era was shifting rapidly. Punk rock had arrived in 1976 as a deliberate cultural rupture — raw, aggressive, anti-establishment, and exactly what a generation of young South Yorkshire people were looking for. Rather than resist this shift, Dave Gill embraced it entirely. He launched **punk rock nights at the Windmill Club** — and in doing so created one of the most significant punk venues in the South Yorkshire region.

The story of the Windmill's punk nights has been documented in detail by Rotherham author **Tony Beesley** in his book *Out of Control: Punk Rock at the Doncaster Outlook and Rotherham Windmill 1976-1978* (Days Like Tomorrow Books, 2010) — the second volume of his acclaimed *Our Generation* trilogy. Beesley describes the Windmill as one of the two defining punk venues of the South Yorkshire scene, alongside the Doncaster Outlook. *Between these two venues, almost every punk band of the era performed.* The book is available as a WH Smith signed edition — a copy of which forms part of the Jesters/Windmill archive.



Out of Control: Punk Rock at the Doncaster Outlook and Rotherham Windmill 1976-1978 by Tony Beesley (Days Like Tomorrow Books, 2010). WH Smith Signed Edition. The cover shows two young Rotherham punk women — one with a Clash badge clearly visible — photographed at the Windmill. This book documents in detail the punk nights at the Windmill Club, Millmoor, including the acts who appeared and the people who attended. Julie Longden (short dark hair) features on the front cover.

The acts who played the Windmill

Under Dave Gill's management, the Windmill Club attracted some of the most significant acts of the early punk era to Rotherham. Documented by Tony Beesley in *Out of Control* and confirmed by contemporary photographs and accounts:

Billy Idol and Generation X — on their first nationwide tour. Billy arrived at the Windmill on his motorcycle and, on attempting to enter, was told to get to the back of the queue. A photograph of a young Billy Idol drinking at the Windmill bar appears in Beesley's book.

Glen Matlock's Rich Kids — ex-Sex Pistol Glen Matlock's post-Pistols band, among the most prestigious bookings on the early punk circuit.

Wayne County's Electric Chairs — the gender-transgressive American punk pioneer, performing in Rotherham.

The Jam, Ramones, Buzzcocks, Ultravox, The Boys, The Adverts — documented at the Windmill/Outlook circuit in Beesley's account.

The Skunks — local Rotherham punk band, featured in both the Sheffield Star article and Beesley's book.

The Prams — Rotherham's very first punk band, led by Simon Ellis.

The broader significance

The Windmill under Dave Gill was, Tony Beesley concludes, among the first venues in the region to host punk nights. The cover of *Out of Control* features **Julie Longden** — one of the Rotherham original punks documented in the book — photographed at the Windmill in 1977 with badges including The Clash on her jacket. The Rotherham Advertiser noted in 2017 that the Windmill punk nights were "among the first in the region."



The Star (Sheffield), Tuesday 8 November 1977. "Pogo-ing with the punk rockers." Report by Phil Bassett; photographs by John S. Smith and Stuart Hastings. Features Dave Gill as "club manager David" at the Windmill Club. Eight months after Jesters closed, Dave Gill was already revitalising a new venue with the music of the moment.

Dave Gill — reading the room, again

Dave Gill's pivot to punk at the Windmill is entirely consistent with everything the Jesters archive reveals about his character as a promoter. At Jesters he had tried soul nights, found they didn't work, and switched back to cabaret. He had booked Brotherhood of Man before they were famous. He had brought American soul acts to a South Yorkshire cabaret room when nobody else thought to try. He always followed what the audience wanted.

By 1977, what young South Yorkshire wanted was punk. And the man who had brought The Drifters to Mexborough was now hosting Billy Idol and the Rich Kids in Rotherham. Different music. Same principle. The promoter's instinct — find what people want, book it, fill the room — never left him.

The *Sheffield Star* feature of 8 November 1977 captures the Windmill at the height of this moment. The *Out of Control* book preserves it for posterity. And the WH Smith signed copy in the Jesters/Windmill archive connects both stories — the cabaret era and the punk era, Dave Gill and the Windmill, Mexborough and Rotherham — in a single South Yorkshire entertainment narrative of remarkable richness.

The Windmill Club punk roster — confirmed acts

- ♦ **Billy Idol / Generation X** — first nationwide tour; Billy photographed at the Windmill bar (Tony Beesley, *Out of Control*)
- ♦ **Glen Matlock's Rich Kids** — ex-Sex Pistol; among the most prestigious early punk bookings
- ♦ **Wayne County's Electric Chairs** — American punk pioneer, documented at the Windmill
- ♦ **The Skunks** — local Rotherham punk band; featured in the *Sheffield Star*, 8 November 1977
- ♦ **The Prams** — Rotherham's first punk band, led by Simon Ellis
- ♦ **The Jam, Ramones, Buzzcocks, Ultravox, The Boys, The Adverts** — documented on the Windmill/Outlook circuit
- ♦ Source: Tony Beesley, *Out of Control: Punk Rock at the Doncaster Outlook and Rotherham Windmill 1976-1978* (Days Like Tomorrow Books, 2010); *The Star*, 8 November 1977; Rotherham Advertiser, 2017



XXIII. Legacy & Memory

Jesters has never been entirely forgotten. It appears on YorkshireLive's crowdsourced list of 178 popular Yorkshire pubs and clubs people want to see return. The soul-source.co.uk community remembers it as a key Mexborough soul venue. The Mexborough and District Heritage Society launched a public appeal for information in 2017. And now, with the direct contribution of Dave Gill himself — who joined Jesters on 20 November 1973 as Reception Manager, was appointed Promotions Manager in April 1974, and became Manager in July 1974, and held that post until the final night on Saturday 2 April 1977 — this history has a foundation that no archive alone could provide.

The remarkable fact that Stan Richards and Paul Shane — both destined for television immortality — were performing at Jesters in December 1974 gives the venue a place in the broader history of British popular entertainment. Brotherhood of Man appeared in approximately January 1976, three months before winning Eurovision. YouTube: [Save Your Kisses for Me](#) Paul Daniels, The Krankies, Cannon & Ball, Little & Large, Russ Abbot, Marti Caine — the Jesters stage was a rung on the ladder for all of them.

The Brotherhood of Man story perhaps best captures what made Jesters remarkable. Dave Gill booked them, they performed, their management offered a return date at a 15% premium. He turned it down — at the time they had not yet been selected for Eurovision and the increase seemed unjustified. The week the return booking would have taken place, they were No.1 in the charts and Eurovision champions. It is a story that could only belong to someone who was there, making decisions in real time, without the benefit of hindsight.

After Jesters closed, Dave Gill moved on to the Windmill Club at Rotherham United's Millmoor ground — launching punk rock nights that attracted the attention of the *Sheffield Star* in November 1977. The man who had brought The Drifters to Mexborough was eight months later giving young South Yorkshire punks a room to pogo in. Different music, same principle: find what the audience wants, and give it to them. That continuity of purpose — from the Top Rank Doncaster to Jesters to the Windmill Club — is the thread that runs through Dave Gill's extraordinary career in South Yorkshire entertainment.

The model for preserving this history exists: the Aquarius Chesterfield Project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, spent several years from 2022 digitising photographs, recording oral histories, and publishing a commemorative book. Jesters deserves a similar effort. The documents are out there — as the primary sources in this history demonstrate — and the man who made it all happen is willing to talk. That is where any future heritage project should begin.

"Their management offered a return booking at a 15% increase in fee — but I turned it down because they had not yet been chosen to represent the UK. The proposed week at the club, they were number one in the charts and had won the Eurovision."

— DAVE GILL, PROMOTION BOSS, JESTERS CLUB, ON BROTHERHOOD OF MAN, 1976



XXIII. The Mansfield Brewery Years — Hollingwood Hotel and The Old House, 1978-1986

When Mansfield Brewery began leasing out its clubs in 1977, it marked the start of a significant new chapter — both for the company and for Dave and Sheila Gill. Jack Williamson retired from the Punch Bowl Entertainments board — and took the **Punch Bowl Entertainments** name with him. The brewery registered a new name for the group: **Mansfield Inns**, chosen by the new incoming Retail Director, **Colin Lowther**. The era of Punch Bowl Entertainments — the corporate identity under which Jesters had operated, the name on Dave Gill's business card, the letterhead on Mick Pickard's thank-you letter — was over. Jack Williamson had built it. He took its name when he left.

Jack Williamson and his son John took on the lease of the **Aquarius, Chesterfield** — the sister venue to Jesters that had been part of the same Punch Bowl Entertainments circuit. The Dunkirk veteran and Military Cross holder, who had negotiated with Hughie Green to create a national television talent show, ended his Punch Bowl career by returning to the venue he had helped create, now as its leaseholder. His son John carried the management forward.

Under the new Mansfield Inns banner and Retail Director Colin Lowther, Dave and Sheila Gill were appointed managers of the **Hollingwood Hotel**, Staveley — a property that had been part of the Punch Bowl Entertainments Hotels division. Opened on **15 September 1928** as the flagship of the Chesterfield Brewery, the Hollingwood was a marvel of its era: a resident orchestra, thirteen modern bedrooms with hot and cold running water. Dave and Sheila Gill spent three happy years there.

A new Retail Director then arrived: **Derek Mapp**, from Tadcaster's **Samuel Smith's** — Yorkshire's oldest brewery, established in 1758. Derek Mapp went on to found the Tom Cobleigh pub chain and Leapfrog Nurseries, became Chair of the East Midlands Development Agency, High Sheriff of Derbyshire in 2014, and was involved in the regeneration of Silverstone motor racing circuit. Under Derek Mapp's directorship, Dave and Sheila Gill were offered the opportunity to manage **The Old House** in Newbold, Chesterfield — purchased from Mr Peter Mullen and developed into what is now known as **The Olde House** (oldehousepub.co.uk). It was a proud moment. They left in **February 1986** to start Acorn Self Drive.

A formal photograph from the completion of the first phase of The Olde House development shows Robin Chadburn, Dave Gill and Sheila Gill together at the bar — Robin Chadburn and Dave Gill shaking hands across the counter, Sheila holding a bouquet of flowers, the Mansfield Brewery pump clips and lager keg clearly visible. It is a photograph that quietly connects three moments: the opening of Jesters on 13 November 1972, the Yorkshire Television Grand Final on 29 September 1974, and the redevelopment of The Olde House, Newbold — Robin Chadburn present at all three, the constant thread through Dave Gill's Mansfield Brewery career.



Robin Chadburn (left), Chairman of Mansfield Brewery, with David Gill (right) and Sheila Gill (centre, holding bouquet) at The Olde House, Newbold, Chesterfield — after the completion of the first phase of its redevelopment. Mansfield Brewery pump clips and Lager keg visible on the bar. The same Robin Chadburn who officially opened Jesters Club on 13 November 1972, and who presented the prizes at the International Clubland Talent Show Grand Final on 29 September 1974.

THE OLDE HOUSE

Hotel & Restaurant

DAVID GILL
Manager

Newbold, Chesterfield, Derbyshire. Tel: (0246) 74321/2.

The Olde House Hotel & Restaurant, Newbold, Chesterfield, Derbyshire. Tel: (0246) 74321/2. David Gill, Manager. The second of three business cards spanning Dave Gill's career — between the Jesters Club card ("P. D. Gill, Manager, Punch Bowl Entertainments Ltd., Mexborough 3867/8") and the Acorn Self Drive card ("David Gill, Managing Director, Acorn Car and Van Hire (Chesterfield) Ltd.").

1977 — Mansfield Brewery begins leasing its clubs. Jack Williamson retires from Punch Bowl Entertainments board, **taking the Punch Bowl Entertainments name with him**. The brewery registers a new name: **Mansfield Inns**, chosen by incoming Retail Director Colin Lowther. Jack Williamson and his son John take on the lease of the Aquarius, Chesterfield

Retail Director Colin Lowther appoints Dave and Sheila Gill as managers of the **Hollingwood Hotel, Staveley** — Punch Bowl Hotels division property, opened 15 September 1928 as flagship of the Chesterfield Brewery; resident orchestra; thirteen bedrooms with hot and cold running water
Three happy years at the Hollingwood Hotel

Retail Director Derek Mapp arrives from Samuel Smith's, Tadcaster (Yorkshire's oldest brewery, founded 1758). Later: founder of Tom Cobleigh pub chain and Leapfrog Nurseries; first Chair of East Midlands Regional Development Agency (EMDA); High Sheriff of Derbyshire 2014; involved in regeneration of Silverstone motor racing circuit

Under Derek Mapp: Dave and Sheila Gill appointed managers of **The Old House, Newbold**,

Chesterfield — purchased from Mr Peter Mullen; redeveloped and now known as **The Olde House Hotel & Restaurant** (oldehousepub.co.uk). Business card: "David Gill, Manager, The Olde House Hotel & Restaurant, Newbold, Chesterfield, Derbyshire. Tel: (0246) 74321/2." Robin Chadburn, Chairman of Mansfield Brewery, photographed with Dave and Sheila Gill at the bar after completion of the first phase of redevelopment

11 February 1986 — Dave Gill formally leaves Mansfield Inns. He had co-founded Acorn Car and Van Hire (Chesterfield) Ltd. with Chris Franczak in 1984 as a 50% shareholder, but his Mansfield Inns contract prevented him from becoming a director until his departure. He becomes **co-director** of Acorn on leaving; on the sale to Northgate Plc in 1994, he becomes Managing Director



XXIV. After the Hotels: Acorn Car and Van Hire, February 1986-1994

In **1984**, Dave Gill co-founded **Acorn Car and Van Hire (Chesterfield) Ltd.** with business partner **Chris Franczak**, holding a **50% shareholding**. However, the terms and conditions of his contract with Mansfield Inns prevented him from becoming a director while still employed by the company. As with any new business, it takes time to build — and Dave Gill continued working for Mansfield Inns, managing The Olde House, Newbold, while Acorn established itself. He formally left Mansfield Inns on **11 February 1986**, at which point he became **co-director** of Acorn — trading as **Acorn Self Drive** — based at Works Road, Barrow Hill, Chesterfield S43 2PR. By its 10th anniversary in March 1994, Acorn was providing contract hire services to several local authorities and companies, a member of United Vehicle Rentals, and sponsoring the local Acorn netball team. Dave Gill described it as "*a local company, owned and run by Chesterfield people.*" In **1994** — the same year as Acorn's 10th anniversary — the business was sold to **Northgate Plc**. Chris Franczak left the business at that point; Dave Gill stayed on as **Managing Director** under the new ownership.



Derbyshire Times, Thursday 3 March 1994. Full page feature marking Acorn Car and Van Hire (Chesterfield) Ltd.'s **10th Anniversary**. Photograph shows the Acorn netball team — sponsored by Acorn, competing locally — with **Chris Franczak** (left) and **David Gill** looking on. The article quotes David Gill: "The reason we have grown into the size we are today is because we have given the customer good service and value for money — constantly." Congratulations advertisements from Van Dyk Hotel, Clowne (formerly Punch Bowl Entertainments Hotels division); Lombard Business Finance; and GK Group. Notable: Acorn's sponsorship of a bowls tournament at the Hollingwood Hotel — the same venue Dave and Sheila Gill had managed for Mansfield Inns a decade earlier.

The Van Dyk connection

The congratulations advertisement from the **Van Dyk Hotel, Clowne** is a quiet but telling detail. The Van Dyk — Clowne 810219 on the 1974 Punch Bowl Entertainments establishment list — was a Punch Bowl Hotels division property, the same corporate family that owned Jesters, the Aquarius, the Windmill Club and the Hollingwood Hotel. A decade after Jesters closed, the Van Dyk was still congratulating David Gill on his business success. The Mansfield Brewery world was, as always, a small one.

Chris Franczak

Chris Franczak — named in the photograph caption and confirmed as Dave Gill's business partner — co-founded Acorn Car and Van Hire (Chesterfield) Ltd. and is pictured alongside Dave Gill at the 10th anniversary celebration. His role as the friend and partner who built Acorn alongside Dave Gill is now formally documented.



Dave Gill's career in full

c.1969-1972 — Top Rank Suite, Silver Street, Doncaster (under Colin Carruthers)

c.1972-1973 — Assistant Manager, Mecca's Annabellas, Bradford city centre

c.1973 — Bar Manager, Outlook Club, Doncaster (new disco, just opening; opening night act: Pan's People, resident dance troupe of BBC's *Top of the Pops*. YouTube: [Pan's People on Top of the Pops](#))

20 November 1973 — Joins Jesters as Reception Manager

April 1974 — Appointed Promotions Manager by Mick Pickard (after being caught yawning at the reception desk)

July 1974 — Becomes Manager of Jesters Club

Saturday 2 April 1977 — Final night of Jesters Club

1977-1978 — Manager, Windmill Club, Rotherham United FC (Millmoor)

1978-1984 — Hollingwood Hotel, Staveley; The Olde House, Newbold (under Mansfield Inns)

1984 — Co-founds Acorn Car and Van Hire (Chesterfield) Ltd. with Chris Franczak as 50% shareholder (remains employed by Mansfield Inns until 11 February 1986 under contract terms)

March 1994 — Acorn's 10th anniversary; *Derbyshire Times* feature

1994 — Acorn sold to Northgate Plc. Chris Franczak leaves the business; Dave Gill stays on as Managing Director

1994-2025 — Partner in Sheila Gill Art; RHS Flower Shows, Horse Trials and Craft Shows across the UK

2025 — Retirement

From a Doncaster ballroom where David Bowie played Ziggy Stardust — via Mecca's Annabellas in Bradford and a Doncaster disco where his heart wasn't in it — to a Mexborough cabaret club where The Drifters performed twice and Norman Vaughan signed Sheila's brochure, to punk nights at Rotherham United, to a commercial vehicle hire business in Chesterfield — and throughout it all, Sheila, his superstar, beside him.



XXIV. Sheila Gill: A Life Painted in Colour

The woman Dave Gill met at Jesters Club on Manvers Road, Mexborough — the woman he called "my superstar," whose brochure carries Norman Vaughan's autograph in blue biro — is herself an artist of considerable achievement and national recognition. In July 1999, Sheila Gill appeared on **Channel 4's Watercolour Challenge** — the beloved afternoon programme produced by Planet 24 North —

and **won her heat** at the National Tramway Museum, Crich, Derbyshire. The woman who had run Jesters Club with Dave, raised two children, and co-founded a commercial vehicle business, painted her way onto national television — and won.

Roots Along the Water

Sheila grew up in Mexborough — the same town as Jesters — raised in a rural bungalow beside the canal where her family ran the local corn merchants. Life was simple and tactile: no electricity, no television, no modern distractions. Her entertainment was the countryside itself. Armed with a sketchbook, she developed a lifelong habit of observing the world through line and shadow, and nurtured a childhood dream of becoming an animator for Walt Disney.

From Cabaret to Canvas

While her heart belonged to art, life led her through diverse chapters. Sheila trained as a dental nurse and later worked in pharmacy — where she met David. Together they navigated the world of entertainment as managers within the Punch Bowl Entertainments Group, running Jesters and crossing paths with The Drifters, Bob Monkhouse, Ken Dodd and so many more. They moved to the edge of Chesterfield to raise their two children, and co-founded Acorn Car and Van Hire together. Through all of it, Sheila never put down her brushes.

Watercolour Challenge — Channel 4, 1999

In July 1999, Sheila Gill took part in Channel 4's *Watercolour Challenge*, recorded in the Peak District over five days by Planet 24 North. On **Wednesday 21st July 1999**, she competed at the **National Tramway Museum, Crich, Derbyshire** — and won. Her episode transmitted on **Channel 4, Tuesday 12th October 1999, at 3.30 p.m.**, with Sheila Gill listed as winner alongside fellow competitors Polly Birchall and Kelvin Burgoyne.

A letter from Planet 24 North, dated 26th July 1999, signed by Producer Robin Toyne and Associate Producer Sonia Beldom, confirmed the broadcast schedule and carried handwritten congratulations: "*Congratulations again! I hope you did enjoy it after all. With lots of love and wishes for the future.*"



Planet 24 North, Watercolour Challenge (Channel 4). Letter to Sheila, 26 July 1999. Confirms Sheila Gill as **winner** of the Crich Tram Museum heat, Wednesday 21st July — transmitting Channel 4, Tuesday 12th October, 3.30 p.m. Handwritten congratulations from Producer Robin Toyne and Associate Producer Sonia Beldom: "Congratulations again! I hope you did enjoy it after all. With lots of love and wishes for the future."



Sheila Gill at her easel on the cobbled courtyard of the National Tramway Museum, Crich, Derbyshire — filming day for Watercolour Challenge, Wednesday 21st July 1999. Blue waterproof jacket, brush in hand, a broad smile. A vintage red tram behind her. The Watercolour Challenge programme sign visible on the left. This is the winning heat.



Sheila Gill concentrating at her easel as a Channel 4 camera operator films her at close range — the professional broadcast camera and windshield microphone clearly visible. The same cobbled Crich courtyard. A third crew member stands to the right. Sheila on national television, painting.



Inside the Tramway Museum depot at Crich — vintage trams including one marked "Sunderland" visible behind. A man in a blue jacket reads from papers — the judge or presenter — as contestants work at their easels under a parasol. The atmosphere of the competition day captured.



The Watercolour Challenge filming setup at what is believed to be Pavilion Gardens, Buxton — Friday 23rd July 1999, the fifth and final filming day of the week. Easels, folding chairs, white parasols, contestants setting up on the grass. The full production scale of the Channel 4 programme visible.

BBC Inside Out — Dovedale

Sheila Gill's television appearances were not limited to Channel 4's *Watercolour Challenge*. She also painted for the **BBC's *Inside Out*** programme at **Dovedale** — the spectacular limestone valley in the Peak District, carved by the River Dove, with its famous stepping stones and wooded gorge. Four photographs from the filming day capture Sheila at work in the field: seated on the grass bank as a long line of schoolchildren crosses the Dovedale stepping stones behind her; filmed at close range on a limestone rock by the BBC camera crew; and surrounded by a large group of young people gathered to watch a demonstration or workshop by the riverside.



Sheila Gill painting on the bank at Dovedale, Peak District — filming for BBC Inside Out. She is seated on the grass, sketchpad on her knee, completely absorbed in her work while a long line of schoolchildren crosses the famous stepping stones over the River Dove behind her. The wooded limestone valley rises beyond. A perfect image of Sheila Gill's philosophy: painting in the field, in the landscape, undistracted.



Sheila Gill seated on a limestone rock at Dovedale, painting, as the BBC Inside Out camera operator films her at close range. Camera and boom microphone equipment visible. The rocky Dovedale hillside behind. A close, intimate filming setup — Sheila painting for the camera while remaining entirely focused on the work.



BBC Inside Out camera operator crouching with professional camera on tripod filming Sheila Gill as she paints on a limestone rock at Dovedale. A second crew member stands behind. The grassy Dovedale hillside and path visible. Sheila in her blue jacket, completely focused on her sketchpad.



A large group of schoolchildren — 40 or more — gathered at the riverside at Dovedale as Sheila Gill gives a demonstration or workshop, crouching with her sketchpad. The BBC Inside Out cameraman stands to the left filming. The River Dove and the dramatic limestone gorge beyond. Sheila's public engagement as an artist: painting in the landscape, sharing it with others.

Magazine Covers

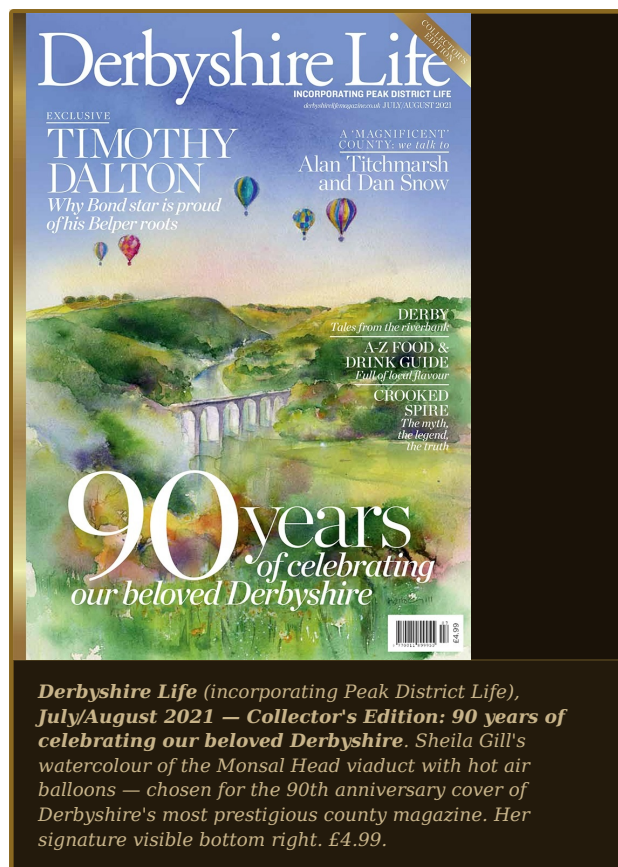
Sheila Gill's work has appeared on the covers of several regional magazines — confirmation of her standing as one of Derbyshire's foremost watercolour artists.



Reflections, Vol. 8 Issue 94, **November 1999** — Derbyshire's largest-circulation lifestyle magazine. Cover story: "The Watercolour Challenge." Sheila Gill on the front cover, holding her palette and brush at her easel with a large sunflower watercolour in progress. Published just months after her Channel 4 Watercolour Challenge heat win at Crich — Sheila Gill, cover star of Derbyshire's biggest lifestyle magazine.



Country Images, Amber Valley Edition, **August 2005**. "Cover painting by Sheila Gill." A moorland landscape in golds, deep oranges and rich purples under a moonlit blue sky — a farmhouse in the valley below. The Peak District palette fully realised: the hidden colours others miss, the alchemy of the landscape on paper.



Taking Art on the Road — and a Life Well Lived

After the sale of Acorn to Northgate Plc in 1994, Dave Gill threw his energy into supporting Sheila's art — transforming her paintings into prints, greeting cards, mugs, bags and cushions, and taking them on the road to sell across the UK at major events. The man who had once negotiated with Roy

Tipper Entertainments and carried contracts to Hughie Green's London office now had a new booking diary: the great outdoor events of the British calendar.

Their circuit included the **RHS Flower Shows** at Malvern, Tatton Park and Hampton Court; the **Shrewsbury, Southport and Yorkshire (Autumn & Spring) Flower Shows**; **Badminton, Burghley and Bramham Horse Trials**; the **Weald of Kent** and **Henley Country Craft Shows**; the **Royal Highland Show**; the **Chatsworth Country Fair**; **Blenheim Palace**; **Patchings ARTfest 2024**; **CarFest, Country Landlords, the Great Yorkshire Show** and many more. The schedule was as demanding, in its own way, as running a cabaret club.

They retired in 2025 — and loved every minute of the adventure.



Sheila Gill at the **Patchings ARTfest 2024**. Behind her: large canvases of foxgloves in vivid pinks and blues; framed rose prints; mugs, cushions and greeting cards bearing her work. "The most talented artist I have ever had the pleasure to meet is my wife." — Dave Gill



*Sheila Gill at the **RHS Malvern Spring Festival Flower Show** — a panoramic view of the full **Sheila Gill Art** stand. Behind her: a bluebell wood, foxgloves, a leaping hare, a deer, meadow landscapes, coastal scenes, birds and seasonal subjects — the full range of her watercolour and mixed media work. To her left: greeting card racks, cushions, mugs. To her right: more framed prints, Christmas cards, more mugs. The Sheila Gill Art branded box in the foreground. Every surface filled. The stand that Dave Gill built for his wife's work — arranged with the same care and professionalism he brought to every stage he ever prepared.*

Inspiration: The Heart of the Peak District

Though she has travelled the globe, Sheila's heartland remains the Peak District. Her work ranges from the tranquil reflections of Linacre Woods to the rugged expanse of the High Peak moors. She prefers the raw energy of the field over the studio, seeking out dramatic weather — finding more soul in a brewing storm than a clear blue sky. To Sheila, a rock is never just grey. She looks for the hidden violets, deep blues and ochres that others might miss, translating the alchemy of the landscape onto paper.

Style and Evolution

Best known for her mastery of watercolours — letting the paint find its own path across the page — she has expanded into oils, mixed media, abstracts, collage and gold leaf. Her current practice is defined by openness to curiosity, free from commercial pressure.

Sheila Gill's work can be explored at **www.sheilagill.co.uk**.

"The most talented artist I have ever had the pleasure to meet is my wife."

— DAVE GILL

"To Sheila, a rock is never just grey. She looks for the hidden violets, deep blues, and ochres that others might miss, translating the alchemy of the landscape onto paper."

— SHEILA GILL, ARTIST · **WWW.SHEILAGILL.CO.UK**

Sheila Gill — Watercolour Challenge, Channel 4, 1999

- ♦ Recorded: **Wednesday 21st July 1999**, National Tramway Museum, Crich, Derbyshire
- ♦ Result: **Winner** — Sheila Gill (with Polly Birchall and Kelvin Burgoyne)
- ♦ Transmitted: **Channel 4, Tuesday 12th October 1999, 3.30 p.m.**
- ♦ Produced by: Planet 24 North for Channel 4. Producer: Robin Toyne. Associate Producer: Sonia Beldom
- ♦ Also filmed: Pavilion Gardens, Buxton (Friday 23rd July 1999)
- ♦ Thank-you letter received from Planet 24 North, 26th July 1999, with handwritten congratulations from both producer and associate producer

Sheila Gill — BBC Inside Out, Dovedale

- ♦ Filmed at **Dovedale**, Peak District — the limestone valley of the River Dove, with its famous stepping stones
- ♦ Programme: **BBC *Inside Out***
- ♦ Four photographs from the filming day: Sheila painting on the bank as schoolchildren cross the stepping stones; filmed at close range by the BBC crew on a limestone rock; close interview/filming setup; and a large group of young people gathered for a demonstration or workshop by the riverside



The Story Doesn't End Here



P. D. Gill — Paul David Gill. Manager of Jesters Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough, July 1974 - Saturday 2 April 1977. The man who brought *The Drifters* to Mexborough. The man who met his wife at Jesters. The man who told this story.

"The story of Jesters doesn't end here. As memories fade back into view, we invite everyone to share their experiences. Let's keep the legacy alive with more photos of the club and the performers who made it the best little venue on earth."

— DAVID & SHEILA GILL

"If I could change anything, I'd increase the club's size by roughly 25% and move it to a main road outside the town centre. The noise complaints were ultimately what shut it down."

— DAVE GILL

If you have memories, photographs, programmes, press cuttings, booking records, or any other material relating to Jesters Club, the artists who performed there, or Roy Tipper Entertainments — please get in touch. The story told here is a beginning, not an end.

Mexborough and District Heritage Society

mexboroughheritage.com

Sheila Gill Art

www.sheilagill.co.uk



XIV. Sources & Further Reading

Primary sources (documents in hand):

1. Souvenir brochure, *The International Clubland Talent Show — Grand Final*, Jesters Nite Club, Mexborough, Sunday 29 September 1974. Five pages now in hand — Sheila Gill's personal copy, kept since the night: (a) Cover — Mansfield Brewery with Punch Bowl Entertainments; prize fund £10,000;

recorded for Yorkshire Television; by invitation only. (b) Acknowledgements — 40 preliminary heat venues; judges Mr. P. Bellamy, Mr. C. Hudson, Mr. G. Payne; Competition Co-ordinator Mr. R. Tipper (Roy Tipper, Skegness); YTV producer Mr. David Millard. (c) Programme for the Evening — seven contestants: Touch of Class, The D-Uvals, Sam Homer, Diamond Boys, Christy "G", Al Showman, Fresh Ground; five Grand Final judges including Norman Collier; compere Norman Vaughan; prize presenter R. W. Chadborn, Chairman, Mansfield Brewery. (d) Establishment list — complete Punch Bowl Entertainments Retail division (20 outlets) and Hotels division (5 properties). (e) Back cover — Mansfield Brewery and Punch Bowl Entertainments Company Limited addresses and logos; bearing the autograph of Norman Vaughan, signed in blue ballpoint pen on the night of 29 September 1974.

2. Letter from Punch Bowl Entertainments Limited to Mr. D. Gill, Jesters, Manvers Road, Mexborough. Dated 7th October 1974. Signed: M. Pickard, for Director — Retail Trade. Thanks Dave Gill and staff for "the considerable amount of work you put in to make the Television Show so successful." Confirms: address as Manvers Road, Mexborough; full corporate details of Punch Bowl Entertainments Ltd. — Reg. No. 186448 England; Regal Chambers, Cavendish Street, Chesterfield S40 1UY; Tel. Chesterfield 2221; Directors: A. J. Scruby T.D., H. G. T. Chalmers F.H.C.I., D. T. N. Tyne F.C.A., J. D. T. Williamson M.C., F.H.C.I.; Reg. Office: Littleworth, Mansfield, Notts.

3. Programme card, *Clubland's Third Annual Christmas Show, Jesters Nightclub, Mexborough*, Christmas 1974. Confirms: Dave Gill (manager); Peter Bellamy; JAVA Management/Jean Allen (Doncaster); Molly Richards (compere); Paul Shane, Stan Richards, Donnas Coleano, Johnny Kalendar & Mainstream, Claude Powell, Ray Trewin, Lindsay Adams, Huff & Puff, Laura and Terry Devon, January, Leon Ryles, Joanna York, Diana Cousins, Brian Carroll, Trevor Bailey, Vic Lunn. Programme note "by kind permission at Mexborough Main St. W.M.C." — significance not established. Alan Harvey & Tony Richards/Rotherham W.M.C. also credited.

4. Press cutting, *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times* ("YOU! With today's top sounds" supplement), Mexborough, c. August 1975. Story: "Dual bill at club" — confirms Dave Gill as promotion boss, Bitter Suite, Drifting Harmony, August 7th date, capacity audience, regional ticket enquiries.

5. Letter from the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police (Police Headquarters, PO Box 14, Snig Hill, Sheffield S3 8LY) to Mr P Gill, c/o The Jesters Night Club, Manvers Road, Mexborough. Dated 23 October 1975. Reference ADM/KD/CLM. Thanks Dave Gill for his "most valuable assistance" during an incident on 14 February 1975 (Valentine's Day) which "prevented more serious injuries to the officers concerned" and "greatly lessened the danger and shortened the length of time involved in dealing with this incident." Third official confirmation of the club's address as Manvers Road, Mexborough.

6. Staff group photograph, c. late 1976 or early 1977. Identifies six individuals: Barry, Tommy Fletcher (Rossington Colliery Mine Rescue), David Gill (Manager), Jeff, Tommy Joyce MBE, Jeff?. Three acts on poster boards: Tommy Hunt, Bobby Knutt, Diamond Boys. Tommy Joyce MBE: Commonwealth Games bronze medallist boxer (Edinburgh 1970), charity fundraiser, awarded MBE 2007.

7. Studio portrait of David Gill, c.1974. Formal dinner-jacket and bow-tie headshot.

8. Business card of *Jesters, Mexborough*. "JESTERS MEXBOROUGH / Tel. MEXBOROUGH 3867/8 / P. D. GILL Manager / PUNCH BOWL ENTERTAINMENTS LTD." Logos: Punch Bowl and Mansfield Brewery double-arch M.

Secondary and press sources:

Tony Beesley, *Out of Control: Punk Rock at the Doncaster Outlook and Rotherham Windmill 1976–1978* (Days Like Tomorrow Books, 2010). Our Generation Vol. 2. ISBN 9780956572707. WH Smith Signed Edition. The definitive account of the Windmill Club punk nights under Dave Gill's management, 1977–78. Confirms acts including Billy Idol/Generation X, Glen Matlock's Rich Kids, Wayne County's Electric Chairs, The Skunks, The Prams, The Jam, Ramones, Buzzcocks, Ultravox, The Boys and The Adverts. Contains photograph of Billy Idol at the Windmill bar. Reviewed in MOJO, Record Collector, Big Cheese and Vive Le Rock. Available at tonybeesleymodworld.co.uk.

The Star (Sheffield), Tuesday 8 November 1977. "Pogo-ing with the punk rockers." Report by Phil Bassett; photographs by John S. Smith and Stuart Hastings. Features Dave Gill as "club manager David" at the Windmill Club, Millmoor, Rotherham. Interviews with Katherine Williams (aged 21), Glyn Durrand (aged 19), and Skunks rhythm guitarist Gerry Larose (aged 17).

Mexborough Nightclub History Explored, Rotherham Advertiser, 10 January 2017. Confirms: opening Monday 13 November 1972; Cannon and Ball, Ken Dodd, Bob Monkhouse, Frank Ifield as regular acts; coaches from across the country.

The Best Times of Your Nite Life — Barnsley Nightlife 1975–1979, broadcastbarnsley.wordpress.com (Neil Anderson), September 2017. Confirms: The Drifters, November 1976; Mexborough's regional entertainment status.

Lost Barnsley Gigs of the 1970s, broadcastbarnsley.wordpress.com, September 2016. Confirms: Bitter Suite as Doncaster-area Tamla Motown/soul covers band; shared member John Parr (later "St Elmo's Fire").

soul-source.co.uk forum, *Mexborough — Who Remembers*, 2016. Lists Jesters as a key Mexborough soul venue.

setlist.fm, Jesters venue page, Mexborough, England. Confirms J.J. Barnes performance.

YorkshireLive/ExaminerLive, *The 178 Popular Yorkshire Pubs and Clubs You Want to See Return*, 2021.

Neil Anderson, *From Stardom to Nostalgia — The Last Stand of the British Cabaret Scene*, The Riff/Medium, August 2023. Essential context on the national cabaret movement and the Aquarius heritage project model.

Biographical sources for confirmed performers: Paul Shane — Wikipedia, Grokipedia, IMDB, Yorkshire Post obituary (May 2013); Stan Richards — Wikipedia, Emmerdale fandom wiki, emmerdale.me.uk, Grokipedia; Cannon and Ball — Wikipedia, Television Heaven, Grokipedia.

Oral and direct sources:

David (Dave) Gill, Reception Manager at Jesters from 20 November 1973; Promotions Manager from April 1974; Manager from July 1974 to 2 April 1977; subsequently Manager of the Windmill Club, Rotherham, 1977–78. The primary narrator of this history. Direct testimony from Dave Gill has confirmed: the full ownership structure (Punch Bowl Entertainments / Mansfield Brewery); Roy Tipper Entertainments of Skegness as main booking agent; the complete roster of artists; the Brotherhood of Man booking (c. January 1976) and the decision not to accept their return offer at a 15% fee increase — a decision made before they were selected for Eurovision, during which proposed return week they were UK No.1 and Eurovision champions; and numerous other details of the club's day-to-day operation that no archive source could supply.

Ownership structure of Jesters Club: owned by **Punch Bowl Entertainments**, a subsidiary of **Mansfield Brewery Co. Ltd**, Littleworth, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Mansfield Brewery's history is well documented: founded 1855; publicly listed 1935; acquired Chesterfield Brewery 1934; acquired North Country Breweries (Hull) 1985; taken over by Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries 1999; brewery demolished 2008. Wikipedia; Brewery History Society wiki; Nottinghamshire Heritage Gateway.

Roy Tipper Entertainments, Skegness, Lincolnshire — confirmed as the main booking agent for Jesters Club. No public archive record of the agency has been traced; this information is supplied directly by Dave Gill.

Further research & contact:

Mexborough and District Heritage Society: www.mexboroughheritage.com

Dirty Stop Outs (publishers of the Aquarius Chesterfield heritage project — a model for Jesters research): dirtystopouts.com

broadcastbarnsley.wordpress.com — extensive archive of South Yorkshire entertainment history in the 1970s.

If you have memories, photographs, further programmes, booking records, press cuttings, or any other material relating to Jesters or Roy Tipper Entertainments — particularly for the First, Second, Fourth and Fifth Annual Christmas Shows, the final night on Saturday 2 April 1977, the International Clubland Talent Show (winners, judges, presenter, competing acts), or any of the artists named in this history — please contact the Mexborough and District Heritage Society. The Yorkshire Television archive, now held by ITV, may contain footage of or documentation about the September 1974 talent show broadcast. The story told here remains proudly incomplete.

Jesters Club, Mexborough

Monday 13 November 1972 — Saturday 2 April 1977

A local history with seven primary source documents: the International Clubland Talent Show souvenir brochure (Yorkshire

TV, 29 Sept 1974); Punch Bowl Entertainments thank-you letter to Mr. D. Gill (7 Oct 1974); the Clubland Third Annual Christmas Show programme (Dec 1974); a *South Yorkshire Times and Mexborough & Swinton Times* press cutting (c.1975); a staff group photograph (c.1976-77); a studio portrait of Dave Gill (c.1974); and the club's business card (P. D. Gill, Manager, Punch Bowl Entertainments Ltd., Tel. Mexborough 3867/8). Compiled with the direct contribution of Dave Gill.

Key confirmed artists include: Roy Castle · Marti Caine · Norman Collier · Norman Vaughan · Paul Shane · Stan Richards · Cannon & Ball · Ken Dodd · Bob Monkhouse · Frank Ifield · Frank Carson · Bernard Manning · Les Dawson · Colin Crompton · Ken Goodwin · Duggie Brown · Russ Abbot · Little & Large · The Krankies · Paul Daniels · Brotherhood of Man · The Rockin' Berries · Mac & Katie Kissoon · Ronnie Dukes & Ricky Lee · Tony Addams & Grandad · The Drifters · Tommy Hunt · The Fantastics · The Foundations · J.J. Barnes · Stéphane Grappelli · Ivy Benson · Éric Delaney · Major Lance · Wayne Fontana · Bitter Suite · Drifting Harmony · Diamond Boys · Bobby Knutt · The Wombles · Thurnscoe Harmonic Male Voice Choir

Sources: Rotherham Advertiser · broadcastbarnsley · soul-source.co.uk · setlist.fm · YorkshireLive

Mexborough and District Heritage Society · mexboroughheritage.com

Errors and omissions excepted.